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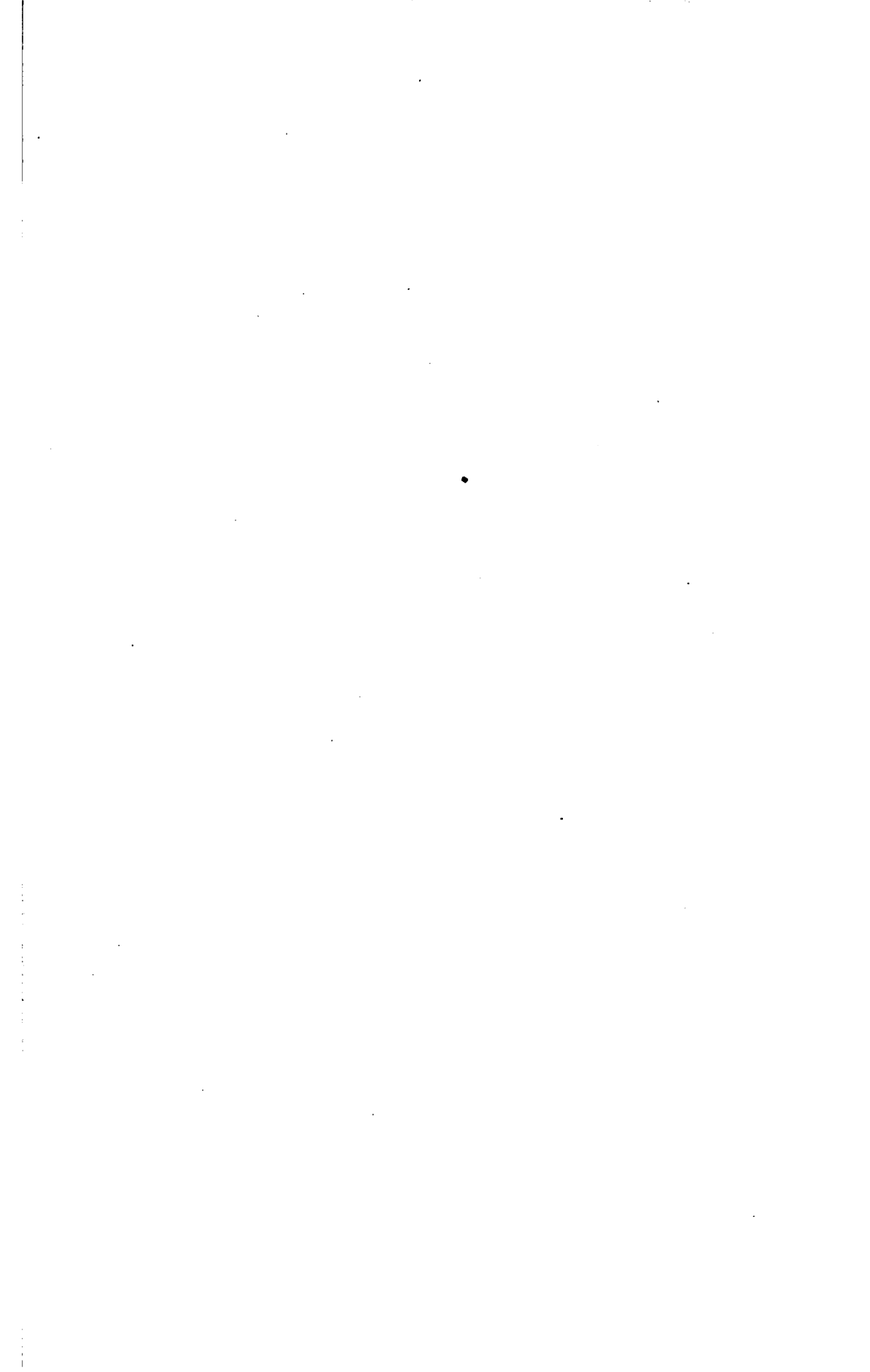
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CHARLES DICKENS.

THIRD SERIES.

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# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
<b>A VALIANT IGNORANCE. A</b>	
Serial Story by Mary Angela	
Dickens, 1, 26, 49, 73, 97, 121,	
145, 169, 193	
<b>THROUGH THE RANKS. A Serial</b>	
Story by Mrs. Leith-Adams	
(Mrs. R. S. de Courcy Laffan),	
217, 241, 265, 289, 313, 337, 361,	
385, 409, 433, 457, 491, 505, 529,	
553, 577, 601, 625	
<b>ABBREYS, GATEWAYS OF</b>	235
Aberffraw	273
About the Flemings	376
Across a Corner in Essex	220
Across the Pond	77
Africa, Mr. Selous in	390, 424
Africa, Two Hospital Nurses in	519
Almack's, Dancing at	230
Amateur Workhouse Visiting	635
America, Quick Trips to	77
Among the Black Mountains	439
Andersen's Fairy Tales	200
Anne Bleyen and Rochford Hall	225
Another View of Mashonaland	519
Anglesea, Storms at	272
Arctic Ocean, A Trip to the	111
Ascent of Bruncu Spina	40
Arms of England	492
At Cross Purposes. A Story	204
Atlantic Steamers	78
Austen, Jane	105
Authors, Some Forgotten	52
Authors, their Favourite Reading	102
<b>BAD LUCK</b>	328
Bank Dividend Day	462
Bath Road, The Old	6
Bermondsey Abbey	238
Between the Seasons	414
Bicyclists, The Lady	105
Black Mountains	439
Blessington, Lady, Novels of	84
Books and Great Writers	102
Books, Prefaces	132
Borough Old Inns	234
Boston, The Two	587
Box Street Runners	8
Bramber Castle	85
Brecknock Beacons	207
Brecon	207
Brighton, Old Heroes of	87
Brighton, Old Roads to	35
Brighton, Prince Regent at	86
Brimstone Pete	260, 288
British Funds	464
Bruncu Spina Mountain	40
Bureaux, Labour	005
Barred Treasure	443
Busby, Dr., and the Drama	137
Buttermere Mountains	347
<b>"CAMPAIGN" STEAMER, THE</b>	81
Candid Friend, The	465
Canterbury	252
Captain Cleveland	342
Carlisle, The Gates of	234
Carus, The Emperor	153
Cassell's Telegraph	177
Castle of Otranto, The	32
Castle Spectre, The	82
Charity	59
Chatham	824
Chivalry, Orders of	492
Charles the Second and the Ladies	54
Claremont House	174
Claude Vignet	295
Club, A Ladies'	446
Coaching on the Bath Road	7
Coach Road to Brighton	85
Coal Industries	590
Cock Pit, The	138
Cockade, The White	402
"Celebs in Search of a Wife"	83
Cold in Sweden	250, 320
Colnbrook, Historical Notes	10
Coin, The River	10
Colours and National Emblems	490
Concerning Pipes	245
Conspiracy, A Remarkable	632

	PAGE
Copenhagen	298
Corinth Canal	449
Cotillon, The	232
"County House," A	118
Courtship of Sir Henry Hayes	325
Crauford Old Church	7
Crayford	249
Cross Purposes. A Story	204
Crouch, The River	223
Cuckfield Place	89
Curious Pipes	245
Cyclists, Lady Tourists	103
<b>DAILY THEATRE, THE PORTIC</b>	
Drama at	420
Dances	230
Dartford	249
Day as a Hop Picker	180
De Burgh of Hadleigh	221
De Quincosy	83
Dinner, Imperial Roman	64, 151
Dividend Day	462
Dogs in Sweden	318
Dover Castle	252
Dover Road, The	248
Drama, The Poetic	420
Dramatic Authors	423
Dramatic Difficulties	135
Drive in Italy	125, 159
Dublin Court of Common Pleas	164
Duel, An Irish	165
Duel, Duke of York and Colonel Lennox	173
Duel, Sir Francis Burdett and John Paul	170
Dutch Winter, A	537
<b>ELAGABALUS</b>	152
Emblems, National	490
Equinoctial and other Storms	270
Esher	173
Essex, Across a Corner of	220
Eternal Past, The. A Story	90, 116
Etna in the Dog Days	55
<b>FAIRY TALES</b>	198
Faversham	251
Financial World, Rockets in the	11
Fireworks	13
Flemings, About the	376
Fleur-de-Lys of France	491
Flirtation, A Frosty. A Story	614
Folk-Lore, Norwegian	474
Football	558
Forgotten Novelists	82
France—The King's Double	293
French Flags	491
Friend, The Candid	465
From Minuet to Skirt Dancing	230
Furnished House, A	113
<b>GAD'S HILL</b>	250
Gales at Sea	270
Galt's Novels	83
Gateways	233
German Pipes	247
Ghent	377
Godalming	175
Good Luck	328
Gore, Mrs., Novels of	84
Gow, The Pirate	342
Gourmets, Some Italian	64, 151
Grady, Harry	164
Gray's Writing Telegraph	178
Greece—The Corinth Canal	449
Greenland	112
Grey Boy, The. A Story	500, 525, 548, 572, 594, 620, 642
Guildford Castle	175
<b>HADLEIGH CASTLE, ESSEX</b>	221
Hadleigh Church	221
Hannay, James, Novels of	85
Harrington Corner	71
Hayes	368
Hayes, Sir Henry, Courtship of	325
Heraldic Emblems	493
"Herb of Grace"	274
Highlands, Lady Bicyclists in the	105
Highwayman, Spanish Jack	368
Highwaymen on the Bath Road	8
Hindhead Hill	175

	PAGE
Historic Inns	53
Historic Kisses	53
Holiday Making at the Seaside	39
Holland, Winter in	536
Hookah Pipes	247
Hook, Theodore	84
Honourable Intentions. A Story	187
Hop Picker, A Day as a	180
Hospital Nurses in Mashonaland	519
Hounslow Barracks	7
Hounslow Heath	7
House, Taking a Furnished	113
Hunt, Leigh, Favourite Book	104
<b>ICE FIELDS</b>	110
Ill Luck	332
Imperial Dinners	61, 151
Inchbald, Mrs., Novels of	83
Indian Pipes	247
In Poncha City	395
Inns on the Brighton Road	85
Inns on the Bath Road	7
Irish Duel	165
Irish Judic al Joker	164
Irish Courtship. A Story	325
Ironstone Works	185
Ironworks, The Wealden	184
Italian Gourmets	64, 151
Italy, A Drive in	125
<b>JAMAICAN CHURCHES, SOME OLD</b>	487
Johnson, Dr., Studies of	104
Joker, A Judicial	164
Jokes, Old, in New Form	544
Judge Toler	165
Juggling	534
<b>KANE, IRONWORKS OF</b>	154
Kentish Weald, The	369
King's Double	293
Kingston Town	173
Kissce, Royal	52
Knock Farrel	106
Knockholt Beeches	368
Knole Park	369
<b>LABOUR BUREAUX</b>	605
Ladies' Club	446
Ladies "on the Road"	105
Lady Tourists in the Highlands	107
Lakeland, Three Days in	346
Lamb, Charles	103
Leigh Church	220
Legends and Folk-Lore	474
Life, The Problem of	329
Likeness—The King's Double	293
Lincoln's Inn Gateway	234
Literary Failures	84
Living in Sweden	299, 322
Lockhart, John Gibson	80
London Gates	233
London Old Inns	234
London to Brighton, Old Road	85
Long Vacation Romance	253
Lovett, Lord	106
Luck	318
<b>MACAULAY, FAVOURITE READING OF</b>	102
Magic Plants	275
Magna Charts, Signing	10
Malmö Hotel	299
"Man of Feeling," The	82
Man the Lifeboat	40
Mashonaland	390, 424
Mashonaland, Another View of	519
Medway, A Voyage up the	322
" " at Rochester	253
Minnesota, A Sketch in	610
Minuet, The	230
" " to Skirt Dancing	230
Mistress Sarah's Romance	540
Modern Whist	277
Mole, Bridge over the River	174
Monasteries, Gateways of	235
"Monk" Lewis	82
Moonwort Plant	275
More Imperial Dinners	151
Morgan, Lady, Novels of	83
Mount Etna in the Dog Days	57
Mountain, Bruncu Spina	40
Mountains of Buttermere	317
" " The Black	439

	PAGE		PAGE	Stories—continued :	PAGE
Mountains, Welsh Beacons	207	Royal Buckhounds	8	Two Letters	805, 883
My Friend's Contribution. A	61	Royal Kisses	52	White Lilac	212, 235
"Mysteries of Udolpho," The	82	Rubber or Two	277	Zenobia	855, 879, 404, 429, 453, 477
NAPLES TO PALERMO	55	Rue and Rosemary	278	Storms	270
National Emblems and National		Rye, The Road to	369	Strathpeffer	107
Colours	490	SANDOWN PARK	173	Study in Character	468
Newark Abbey	174	Sardinia, Mountains of	40	Success	323
New Colony	390, 424, 519	Sea Fell	350	Summer at St. Luke's	302
Nixon's Prophecies	210	Scilly Islands, Storms at	271	Summer, The End of	416
Norwegian Folk-Lore	474	Sea Bathing, The Fashion of	85	Sutton Place	174
Novelists, Some Forgotten	82	Seaside Existence	39	TACITUS, BANQUETS OF	153
Nurses in Mashonaland	519	Sea, Storms at	270	Telautograph, The	177
OCCUPATION—AUTHOR	586	Seal Killing	110	Temple Bar	231
Ocean Steamers, Latest Types of	81	Self-Help	330	Tennyson's "Foresters"	421
Old Bath Road	6	Self-made Martyr, A	372	Theatres, Old Dramatic Diffi-	
Old Coaching Days	6	Selous's Travels in Africa	390, 424	culties	135
Old Dover Road, The	248	Sevensoaks	369	"There's Rue for You"	273
Old Dramatic Difficulties	185	Severus, Alexander	152	Tivoli	131
Old Fairy Tales	198	Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat	100	Tobacco Pipes	248
Old Inns of London	234	Sheerness Ports	323	Tobacco, The Best	248
Old Jamaican Churches	487	Shelley and Boccaccio	104	Toler, John, Judge	164
Old Jokes in New Forms	544	Short Change	582	Three Days in Lakeland	346
Old Jones	417	Shooter's Hill Highwaymen	240	Three Wishes	201
Old Portsmouth Road	172	Sicilian Coast, The	55	Tricolour Flag	491
Old Roads to Brighton	85	Sittingbourne	261	Trip to the Arctic Ocean	109
Omnibus Story	361	Skating in Sweden	318	True Story of an Irish Court-	
On Going Slow	156	Skirt Dancing	232	ship	325
On Kali's Shoulder. A Story	18, 44, 68	Slang	510	True Story of a Pirate	342
Only Jack. A Story	496, 515	Slow, On Going	158	Trying our Wings. A Story	138
Opportunities, Making Use of	328	Some Forgotten Novelists	82	Tunbridge Castle	369
"Ostrich Inn," The	10	Some Great Writers and their		Tunbridge Wells Old Road	307
Our Coal Industries	590	Favourite Reading	102	Turkish Pipes	247
Our Ladies' Club	448	Some Italian Gourmets	64, 151	Two Bostons, The	567
PALERMO, THE STREETS OF	56	Some Old Dramatic Difficulties	135	Two Letters. A Story	805, 333
Palestrina	131	Some Old Jamaican Churches	487	UNCLAIMED DIVIDENDS	
Panama, Isthmus of	449	South-East Africa	390, 424	Up Etna in the Dog Days	55
Peggy Bedford	9	Spanish Jack	368	VIGNEY, CLAUDE	297
Penshurst Place	870	Spello	159	Volcano, Etna	56
Pertinax, Death of	151	Spiame—The King's Double	298	Voyage up the Medway	322
Petersfield	176	St. Bartholomew the Great	233	Voyage to America, The	78
Phantom Fortune	562	St. Catherine's Hill	175	WALLES—BRACKNOCK BEACONS	207
Pipes for Tobacco	245	St. Frances, The Tomb of	160	Wales, Old Kings of	272
Pirate Cleveland	342	St. James's Palace Gateway	233	Waltz, The	230
Pirate Gow.	345	St. John's Gate	233	Ward, R. P., Novels of	84
Pirate Yarn	443	St. Luke's Summer	302	Washing Day on a Western	
Playwrights	422	St. Martha, Chapel of	175	Ranch	13
Poetic Drama at Daly's Theatre	420	Steamer's Dining Saloon	81	Water Gate of York House	233
Polka Dance	232	Steaming to America	78	Walden Iron Works	184
Polly. A Story	228	Stock Exchange	468	Welsh Coast, Storms on the	272
Poncha City	395	Stockholm	298, 318, 320	Welsh Legends	209
Portsmouth Hills	177	Stories:		Western Sketches :	
Portsmouth Road, The	172	A Frosty Flirtation	614	Washing Day	13
Prefaces	183	At Cross Purposes	204	In Poncha City	395
Prittlewell Church	225	Brimstone Pete	280, 283	Whist Playing	277
Professional Football	358	Buried Treasure	443	White Lilac. A Story	212, 235
Prophecies of Nixon	210	Eternal Past, The. A Story	90, 116	Wild Ways, The	39
QUADRILLE, THE	231	Fairy Tales	198	Winter in Holland	536
Queen's Tobacco Pipe	247	Grey Boy, The, 500, 525, 548,	572, 594, 620, 642	Work, On	331
Quite Inexplicable. A Story	39	Honourable Intentions	137	Writers, Great—Favourite Read-	
RABBIT, LIFE OF A BROWN	630	Irish Courtship, Story of	325	ing	102
Radcliffe, Mrs., Novels of	82	King's Double	298	YORK HOUSE	238
Raoul Spiame—the King's		Long Vacation Romance	253	York, The Gates of	234
Double	293	Madame Sarah's Romance	540	ZENOBIA. A Story	
Rayleigh, Town of	223	My Friend's Contribution	61	355, 379, 404, 429, 453, 477	
Red-faced Nixon, A	210	Occupation—Author	586	POETRY.	
Reigate Castle, Cave at	87	Old Jones	417	Alone	156
River Coln	10	Omnibus Story	351	At St. Sebastian	253
Roads, Some Old 6, 85, 172, 220, 248, 367		On Kali's Shoulder	18, 44, 68	Autumn Eve	515
Rochester Bridge	250	Only Jack	496, 515	Fate	61
Rochester Castle	250	Phantom Fortune	562	Finis	468
Rochford Hall	223	Polly	226	Nocturne	614
Rockets	11	Quite Inexplicable	38	Old Year	567
Roman Dinners	64, 151	Rubber or Two	277	On the Cliffs	309
Roman Highways, The	6	Self-made Martyr	372	Question, The	203
Roman Triumphal Arches	293	Study in Character	468	Regret	372
Rough Weather	270	True Story of an Irish		Tobacco, In Praise of	248
Royal Arms	492	Courtship	325		
		Trying our Wings	138		

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# All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

## CHARLES DICKENS.

### CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
A Valiant Ignorance. A Serial		The Eternal Past. A Story in	
Story ... .. 1, 25, 49, 73, 97		Five Chapters ... .. 91, 116	
The Old Bath Road ... .. 6		Fate. A Poem ... .. 61	
Rockets ... .. 11		My Friend's Contributor. A	
Washing-Day on a Western		Complete Story ... .. 61	
Ranch ... .. 13		Some Italian Gourmets ... .. 64	
On Kall's Shoulder. A Story in		Across the Pond ... .. 77	
Six Chapters... .. 18, 44, 68		Some Forgotten Novelists ... .. 82	
Charity ... .. 29		The Old Roads to Brighton ... .. 85	
Quite Inexplicable. A Complete		Some Great Writers and their	
Story ... .. 33		Favourite Reading ... .. 102	
Seaside Existence ... .. 38		Ladies "on the Road" ... .. 105	
Royal Kisses ... .. 52		A Trip to the Arctic Ocean ... .. 109	
Up Etna in the Dog-Days ... .. 55		A Furnished House ... .. 113	

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 235.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 1, 1893.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

MARSTON LORING was sitting at his writing-table, writing with an intentness which harmonised oddly with the suggestion of his evening dress—correct and up-to-date in the minutest particular. He had come rapidly out from the inner room two or three minutes before, evidently acting upon a recently-formed determination; and he was writing now swiftly and decisively. But there was nothing of rashness or impulsiveness about his face or manner as he wrote; he was looking even keener, more calculating and cynical than usual. He finished his note, directed it with the same decision, pushed it aside, and, taking up an open letter which had been lying before him as he wrote, leant back in his chair, and began to reread it. The note, on which the ink was scarcely dry, was addressed to a broker in the City. The letter which he had taken up bore the postmark of a small town in South Africa, and was marked "Private" and "Urgent."

Three days had passed since Julian's explanation to his mother as to his relations with Miss Pomeroy.

Marston Loring had come back from South Africa three months before, with some very excellent machinery ready to his hand for the production of what would materially simplify and embellish his future career—a large fortune. That the machinery was such as a man of honour would have hesitated to put in motion;

that the hands which worked it could hardly escape unstained; affected him not at all. The stains were not such as could be pointed at; it was hardly likely that they would be detected. Certain fellow mechanics were necessary to the proceedings; one of these he had found in Ramsay; the other he had created, so to speak, in Julian Romayne.

The first noticeable production of that machinery had been that first decisive rise in "Welcomes" at the end of June; and since that time it had been worked—mainly by the master-mechanics, Ramsay and Loring—with unceasing skill, energy, and unscrupulousness. Various causes had co-operated to prevent such a speedy consummation as Loring had anticipated when he told Julian that the inside of a month would see the end of the proceedings. The month had gone by, and the shares, though they were now worth ten times as much as had been paid for them by the three in whose hands they now lay, had not yet touched the highest value to which it was proposed to raise them—to which they were rising, as a matter of fact, with ever-increasing rapidity. And yet, notwithstanding the apparent certainty that in another week his shares would have materially increased in value, the note which Loring had just written contained instructions for the disposal of all his interest in the Welcome Diamond Mining Company without fail on the following day.

A very small stone will put out of gear the most skilfully constructed and reliable machine. A very small modicum of fact will reduce the most skilful and elaborate fiction to its elements. The letter which Loring was studying now with knit brows and compressed lips brought



him private information, which he knew might be public property twenty-four hours later, to the effect that the Welcomes Diamond Mine was under water. As soon as that fact was generally made known, shares in the Company would be practically worthless.

He folded the letter and sat for a moment tapping it meditatively against the table. He was thinking deeply; not now about the actual contents of the letter, but of a question which they had raised in his mind; a question interwoven and complicated with other carefully-laid plans. Finally he threw the letter down on the table with a movement of sudden resolution.

"I must!" he said to himself. "It won't do to risk a row."

He glanced hastily at his watch, and then drew out a sheet of note-paper and wrote rapidly:

"DEAR JULIAN,—Be here to-morrow at ten sharp. Don't fail. Yours,

"MARSTON LORING."

He directed the letter to Julian Romayne, Esq., and then rose quickly, took up the hat and light overcoat lying on a chair near him, and went out with the letter in his hand. At the porter's lodge he stopped. "Get this sent by hand this evening," he said, giving the man the letter addressed to Julian. The other letter he posted himself as he passed along the Strand.

He was on his way to dine in Curzon Street, and among his subsequent engagements for the evening the Academy soirées occupied a prominent place.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he arrived at Burlington House, and the vestibule and staircase were alike crowded with people going up and coming down smiling, nodding, and generally obstructing the way, with a bland oblivion of any but their own individual rights to a passage.

At the foot of the stairs Loring was seized upon and absorbed in a portentous obstruction, of which the centre figure was Mrs. Halse, a truly electrifying figure in a painfully fashionable evening frock of a brilliant green.

"I was just looking for a man," she said, in her usual strident tones. "They get such an extraordinary lot of people together here that picking out any one one knows is like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. I suppose nobody ever

did look for a needle in a bundle of hay, by-the-bye. Mr. Halse isn't here, of course"—Mr. Halse was seldom known to appear in public, and when he did so, his meek presence was obviously entirely devoid of interest for his wife—"and I'm looking after Hilda Compton; her husband's coming to fetch her, but he doesn't care about her going about alone. Quite right, too, I tell him," she added, with a laugh. "But of course it won't last."

Hilda Compton, a three months' bride, was standing by looking like a Hilda Newton who had been born and bred in the centre of London society, daring in dress, self-possessed in manner, audaciously pretty in face.

She echoed Mrs. Halse's laugh, and the latter went on, to Loring:

"You can come upstairs with us. It's such a bore not to have a man!" and turning, led the way.

That characteristic feature in her vociferous personality—Mrs. Halse's hobbies—had become crystallised to a great extent since Hilda Newton's engagement and marriage into a passion for matrimonial affairs; not necessarily for match-making; match-marring was quite as keen an interest with her.

The comments with which she beguiled their way into the first room were mainly called forth by the young men and maidens of her acquaintance who happened to catch her eye, and whom she suspected of mutual likings or loathings. They had drifted half-way across the room without coming within speaking distance of any one they knew, when Mrs. Halse broke off in an energetically-whispered account of a certain pretty young woman's partiality for—according to Mrs. Halse—an unresponsive young man, and exclaimed suddenly:

"That's Maud Pomeroy over there, isn't it! It's my belief that she wears those ridiculous white dresses so that people may have something to remember her by. There's nothing in her face, that's certain!"

Loring glanced through the doorway into the other room, to where Miss Pomeroy, in white silk, was smiling very prettily upon a young man who was obviously, if his countenance was to be relied upon, making inane remarks to her. He was a very rich young man, and he had lately succeeded to a title. Loring smiled rather enigmatically.

"It is surely impossible to associate two

such dissimilar ideas as artifice and Miss Pomeroy—oil and water, you know."

"Milk and water, you mean!" put in Mrs. Compton, with a laugh.

Mrs. Halse responded to the little witicism with obstreperous hilarity, and then turned suddenly and confidentially to Loring, and spoke in an eager semi-whisper:

"Now, perhaps you can tell me," she said; "nobody who knows her seems to have been able to pick up anything—not that she has any intimate friends, that kind of girl never has. But you know him, and men gossip much more than women, when all's said and done. Has she behaved infamously to him, or has he behaved infamously to her?"

"Has who behaved infamously to whom?" said Loring, smiling.

Mrs. Halse unfurled her fan, and began to waft it vigorously and excitedly to and fro.

"You do know something about it!" she exclaimed. "Hilda, he wouldn't fence like that unless he knew something. But you're not going to get out of it like that," she continued, addressing herself again to Loring. "I'll tell you plainly of whom I am talking, and you'll tell me plainly what has happened. Maud Pomeroy is the she, and young Romaine is the he. Now, then."

"I give you my word that I know nothing about it."

"I don't believe you," was the answer, given with uncompromising vigour and directness. "Good heavens! Somebody must know something about it. A month ago the Romaines and the Pomeroyes were never apart. You couldn't go into a room without seeing him making eyes at her and her simpering up at him, and their respective mammas exchanging confidences in corners. I was within an ace of congratulating them all round heaps of times. I lived with my mouth open to do it, so to speak; they all seemed so keen about it, it was evidently a matter for fervent congratulation. Though why Mrs. Pomeroy should have cared about it I can't think!" this parenthetically. "He won't have anything of his own while his mother lives. I suppose Maud fancied him! It's my belief that that poor woman daren't call her soul her own where Miss Maud is concerned!"

Mrs. Halse paused, but only for the purpose of taking breath. That very necessary process being accomplished she continued her summary of the position:

"Then she goes to stay with prospective mamma-in-law, and we all stand on tip-toe and hold our breath. She spends a fortnight there, and the next thing we know is that the whole affair is apparently off! Off, if you please! No more making of eyes, no more simperings, no more confidences. And no explanation of any sort or kind. Mr. Loring, I cannot stand it, and I insist on knowing what you know."

"Mrs. Halse, you do know what I know—that is—nothing."

If a large and smart lady could by any possibility permit herself to stamp a large and heavy foot in the midst of a crowded and fashionable assembly, Mrs. Halse stamped hers at that moment. She gazed for an instant into Loring's imperturbable face, and then, becoming convinced of his sincerity, she turned to Mrs. Compton with a gesture of despair.

"Hilda!" she said, "if somebody doesn't find out something soon, I shall die of suspense!"

As it seemed not improbable from her demeanour at the moment that she would obviate the chances of such a calamity by hurling herself upon one of the objects of her interest and wresting a solution of the mystery from him or her by main force, it was perhaps as well that at that moment a temporary distraction presented itself in the shape of a popular actor. Mrs. Halse was very fond of popular actors; they had been a hobby with her at one time. And in the movement and breaking up of the group which ensued, Loring drifted quietly away.

He had made his way gradually into the big room, when he suddenly quickened his steps and began to thread his way skillfully and rapidly through the crowd. Mrs. Romaine was standing on the opposite side of the room, smiling an invitation to him to come and speak to her.

Mrs. Romaine had not been looking her best lately. Somehow the piquant style and daring colour which she affected hardly suited her as they had been wont to do. To-night there was a tired look upon her face which seemed to reveal some recently-traced lines about her mouth; lines of intense and almost dogged determination; and to her restless, sparkling eyes, if she allowed them a moment's repose, there came a certain haggard look, which had seemed for the last three days to lie only just beneath the surface. But these were subtle, hardly perceptible points,

and for the rest she remained a noticeably attractive woman of the most pronounced artificial type.

"Where's the boy?" said Loring easily, when they had shaken hands. "Is he here?"

Mrs. Romaine shook her head and laughed.

"No!" she said. "He rather bars the *soirée*. A mistake, I think. One must take it for what it is, of course; an omnium-gatherum of a perfectly preposterous nature; looked at from that point of view it's not unfunny! Do look at that girl over there! She thinks her garment is a revelation to all beholders!"

"So it is," returned Loring drily.

Mrs. Romaine laughed, and dropped the glasses with which she had been coolly surveying the garment in question.

"That was rather obvious, wasn't it?" she said gaily. "By-the-bye, did you want to see Julian?"

There was a moment's pause after Loring had replied, pleasantly enough, in the negative, and then Mrs. Romaine looked up at him suddenly, and said:

"It's frightfully hot in here, don't you think? Suppose we try one of the less popular rooms?" She stopped a moment, and then added with her most artificial laugh: "Of course, you gather from that that I'm going to victimise you again? Yes; I do want a little quiet talk with you. Who'd be a conspirator?"

There was nothing of the unwilling victim, at least, in Loring's tone or manner as he deprecated her words. Nor was there either reluctance or tedium in his face as he followed her through the room. On the contrary, it was almost lighted up by an expression of sudden purpose.

Mrs. Romaine led the way to the almost deserted miniature room, and they began to walk slowly up and down, to all intents and purposes alone together. There seemed to be no particular point to Mrs. Romaine's desire for a private conference with her fellow-conspirator. She talked about Julian; talked about him carelessly, artificially, but with a persistence which only another mother could have understood; slipping in little questions now and then on all sorts of details connected with that business side of a man's life, as to which she said, "women are always so in the dark," and reverting again and again to her satisfaction and reliance in his mentor.

"It's rather absurd to quote those

ridiculous old proverbs," she said at last, laughing affectedly, "but isn't there one, or a fable, or something, about a duck whose chickens—no, a hen whose chickens, it would be, wouldn't it?—would take to the water, and agitated her awfully because she couldn't go after them? That's exactly what I feel like, I assure you. And I look upon you as an exceptionally sensible water-bird who is also at home on the land—a kind of connecting link. Humiliating smiles, aren't they?"

Loring smiled in answer to her laugh. But his tone as he answered her was rather grave.

"Not by any means humiliating as far as I am concerned," he said; "for you assume a certain amount of sympathy between yourself and me. May I tell you what a pleasure that idea gives me?"

He spoke slowly and deliberately, and Mrs. Romaine started slightly. She glanced up at his face for an instant, unfurling her fan, and using it gently, as though the movement were an outlet for some sort of faint agitation. Loring was not looking at her, his eyes were fixed for the moment on the opposite wall, and his profile told her nothing. There was a hardly perceptible pause, and then he went on, with an admirable mixture of deference, admiration—the depth of which seemed the greater in that it was rather suggested than expressed—and the practical confidence of a man of the world.

"Don't think that I am underrating Julian," he said, "or that my regard for him personally is anything but a very warm and sincere affair, when I tell you that it is a long time now since Julian has figured in my thoughts as anything but his mother's son. Because he is his mother's son there are very few things I would not do for him, very little trouble I would not take for him."

He hardly paused. Mrs. Romaine rather broke in on his speech with a little high-pitched laugh.

"That's very kind and flattering," she said, and there was something astonishingly hasty and nervous in the way she spoke.

"I hope it doesn't come upon you quite as a surprise," answered Loring, with the slightest suggestion of a cynical smile unseen by Mrs. Romaine. "I hope it doesn't need any words of mine to show you what I have tried to show you in more practical ways. You have honoured me with a great deal of confidence, and

you have honoured me still further by putting it in my power to be of some slight service to you. Will you not give me still further powers in that direction? Will you not make our interests practically one by becoming my wife?"

He turned to her as he finished, and in spite of the admirable composure and deference with which he had spoken, his eyes were very eager and elated, almost as though with anticipated triumph.

Mrs. Romayne met his eyes, and stood for a moment gazing into them speechless and motionless, as though the blank astonishment written on every line of her face had absolutely paralysed her.

"Mr. Loring!" she said at last, and there was an almost bewildered remonstrance in her low, astonished tone. "My dear Mr. Loring!"

"One moment," he interposed quickly. "Of course, I don't ask you to look upon it as anything but a question of expediency and mutual goodwill and esteem. We are both of us very well aware that London is not Arcadia. You won't consider it brutal frankness on my part, I'm sure, if I tell you that from a financial point of view our positions are not unequal. I have been exceptionally fortunate lately, and I can offer you an income of about five thousand a year. And if a man's assistance and support counts for something in your life, as I hope it may——"

Mrs. Romayne interrupted him. With all the tact and practicality of a woman of the world, she had mastered her amazement and was mistress of the situation. She spoke kindly and composedly, with just that touch of delicate concern which the occasion demanded.

"Don't say any more, please; it is really quite impossible."

A sudden flash of surprise passed across Marston Loring's face, and he paused a moment, his keen eyes fixed scrutinisingly on her face. He was trying to detect there some signs of that coquetry or affectation of reluctance which he believed must surely underlie her words. His scrutiny failed to detect anything of the kind, however, and an unpleasant glitter came into his eyes.

"Impossible is a rather curt word," he said. "May I ask you to amplify it?"

He saw the colour rise beneath her paint as she answered:

"I have not the faintest intention of marrying, in the first place. And even if there were not innumerable other reasons against what you propose, I'm afraid I

have no fancy for making myself ridiculous! Oh, of course I am well aware"—she laughed a little—"that in my capacity of silly old mother I am as ridiculous as any woman need be. But really, I cannot add another farcical part to that farcical rôle."

"And that farcical part would be——?" enquired Loring.

"That of the old wife of a young husband," she answered with artificial mirth. "Mr. Loring, I am really sorrier, if you are indeed disappointed, than I can tell you. If you have thought that I encouraged you—— But that is too utterly preposterous! I have considered you simply as my son's friend——almost my son's contemporary—a young man with an exceptionally wise and reliable head. Certainly not as a young man who would be foolish enough to want to marry a woman old enough to be his mother."

Loring's lips were rather thin, and his eyes glittered dangerously. As she stood looking at him then with a certain softening excitement about her face, there was no slightest suggestion of age about her, nothing but an admirably developed and preserved maturity. And Loring was a young man in nothing but years.

"That is a mere form of words, if you will pardon my saying so," he said, and his voice was dangerously quiet and controlled. "There is difference between us in years, of course, but that goes for nothing. In experience, in knowledge of the world, if I may say so, the difference between us is practically nil. I am, as you say, your son's friend. But is that a reason for refusing me a larger form of the right which you yourself have pressed upon me, to watch over him and to supplement your care where it must inevitably fall short? For Julian's sake!"

He was confronting her now, looking straight down at her, and as he spoke the last words, all the concern and agitation, partly affected, partly real, with which her face had been moved, vanished before a set expression of unalterable resolution.

"For Julian's sake," she said, in a low, decisive voice, "it is impossible."

He stood for a moment watching her, all the evil of his face standing out in intense relief, and then he made a slight, cold gesture of acquiescence.

"May I take you back into the large room?" he said.

She held out her hand to him with an eager little gesture of apology and appeal.

"We are friends still!" she murmured.

And the murmur was almost pathetically genuine in its anxiety. "It makes no difference!"

Loring's mouth was not good to look at as he answered in a tone absolutely destitute of expression:

"Certainly not!"

### THE OLD BATH ROAD.

A PLEASANT kind of mystery about the old Bath road seems to invite exploration. Has anything been heard of it since that fatal day when the last of its mail coaches was ignominiously hoisted upon a railway-truck and drawn in triumph behind its successful rival, a Great Western engine, to do duty between some country station and a neighbouring town? Great was the fall of this fine highway, second to none in the kingdom in the volume of its traffic; crowded from morning till night with a succession of vehicles, with Royalties and their galloping attendants, with Dukes in their blue ribands and stars, with fashionable dames and high-born beauties, hurrying from balls in London to masquerades at Bath. Four-horse coaches were hardly ever out of sight, stage waggons crawled steadily along one after the other, with their gally-caparisoned teams and jingling bells. From midnight to early dawn there was still subdued life and bustle, under the quiet stars or in the hurly-burly of wind and rain. The road gleamed with the dazzling lamps of the night mails; urgent posts dashed to and fro; lights flitted about in the great ranges of stables where stood the horses already harnessed for the mail, and pricking their ears at the sound of the distant horn. And the waggoners were astir while Charles's wain still shone brightly overhead, and getting ready for the road with subdued clanking of harness and rattle of buckets.

And is there nothing left to show for all this once busy life? Are there no stories, familiar or untold, of this most ancient highway—a road that was famous long before coaches came into being, and that follows pretty nearly the track of Roman highways? Anyhow, let us try it for a spell. And to-day we stand at what was one of the most bustling corners out of London, just after we have passed through Hounslow

High Street, that is hung with inn-signs like an old hall with banners. On one side all is new, with a fine new bank and a grandiose avenue of tall new houses, and a label pointing to the Metropolitan District station. But on the other side is a real glimpse of the old times in a picturesque little inn, with a couple of trees in front just bursting into leaf, and benches and tables for tired wayfarers, and the old sign-post like a quintain, with the old-fashioned Blue Bell dangling from one of its arms, as if in challenge to any passing horseman to run a tilt at it. And there is an obelisk and a tall lamp with a drinking-fountain below, the whole doing duty also as a finger-post, which should point the way here to Salisbury, Exeter, and even to "famed Bolerium, cape of storms," otherwise the Land's End, and there to Bath and Bristol. As times go the direction only extends to Staines and Reading; but a little further along the right-hand road there is a label "Bath Road," which would settle the matter if there were any doubt as to the way.

What a thrill it would give to see the four-horse coaches which have been racing up to this point, now parting to right and left, the drivers saluting each other across the triangular green that parts the two great roads!—There would not be long to wait, for in the prime of the coaching times a four-horse coach would pass one way or the other about every five minutes during the day. Then there were the night mails, eight of which passed through Hounslow to Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, and Stroud on the right; and on the left to Exeter, Yeovil, Poole; with the "Quicksilver" flying mail, to other western towns. One foggy night, a coachman relates, in Harris's "Coaching Days," as he was driving the Exeter mail past Hounslow Corner, another four-horse coach, of which he knew nothing, ranged up alongside him. But he recognised the driver, and, with a half-sarcastic "Good night, Harry," whipped up his horses to take the lead. "Why, Charlie," shouted the other, "what are you doing on my road?" But it was Harry who had taken the wrong road in the fog with the Bath mail, and who might well have driven on till he came to the turnpike at Staines Bridge.

But there is no danger of our making a like mistake. The Bath road lies before us broad and open, and lined on each side

with pleasant villas and terraces. A new church with a handsome spire rises among the villas. And this is Hounslow Heath of ancient fame. And it is still Hounslow Heath when we have passed this bit of London in retreat and have reached the open country. A trumpet-call that issues from a dark mass of buildings over there reminds us that Hounslow Barracks is still a going concern, and may recall the camps innumerable and marchings and counter-marchings, in mimic contest as well as in deadly earnest, of which the old heath has been the field. And here is Hounslow Barracks station, of the neatly District order, with its suggestions of Charing Cross and the Mansion House, but really quiet and rural, and the best starting-place for any pedestrian who would make the acquaintance of the old Bath road.

Wide are the fields on either side of us, the fences few and far apart. Great expanses of market-gardens have replaced the barren heath; here we have the scent of acres of spring onions, there the sweet breath of wallflowers and gillyflowers. If the horizon is low and bounded by an indefinite fringe of scrubby trees, the sky is grand in its broken masses, its burst of light, its cavernous recesses, its silvery folds of fantastic vapours. As might be expected, the old coaching inns are plenty as blackberries on the road. Now it is the "Duke of Cambridge," with a football field in the rear; "Queen Victoria" follows the "Duke," and then an inn that proclaims itself the half-way house to Windsor Castle, ten and a half miles each way. Next the "Traveller's Friend," and the "Jolly Waggoner," suggesting that jovial customer as he sits drinking with the landlord and his friends, while the huge tilted waggon is drawn up alongside and the stout horses are munching their oats in the stable. Except for such associations the road may seem a trifle dull, till after a mile or two its painfully straight course is exchanged for a graceful curve, and wispy trees are replaced by a sweep of groves and avenues, with an old-fashioned red-brick mansion showing among park-like meadows. And a broad avenue of limes leads directly from the high-road to pleasant Cranford village, as quiet and peaceable as ever, with a nice old church where sleeps "worthy" Mr. Fuller and other worthies of a quiet, unexciting kind.

But the great Bath road did not trouble itself about little Cranford, but passed over Cranford Bridge, where a bright little

fishy-looking stream murmurs beneath; a little stream that once nearly drowned a poet—no less a one than Alexander Pope, who, returning from visiting M. de Voltaire at the house of his friend Lord Bolingbroke, which lies just overt here in Harlington, was upset in crossing the ford and soused up to "the knots of his periwig."

Facing each other close to the bridge are two more old coaching inns, the "White Hart" and the "Berkeley Arms," and this last reminds us that we are now in the domains of that powerful West Country family which has shown through so many generations the wild, headstrong temper of the old Danish Viking. The Fitzhardings got a grant of Cranford at the time of the Reformation, when the poor knights of St. John, its former possessors, were ousted from their many pleasant retreats. More inns are dotted along the road, and then we come to Harlington Corner, once well known along the road. And now we begin to understand what a "corner" is in the coaching vocabulary—a place where roads divide, and where there is generally a corner of green turf and a direction post, and invariably a "corner" public-house. And about the house at Harlington Corner—you may put on the "H" or drop it as you please—there was once a pretty dust with a whirl of coaches and postchaises, quiet as it is now, and out of the cloud came one day the regular Bath coach, with its regular driver, who pulled up his horses before the inn. Now, the "Corner" was not in the bill as a stopping-place for this particular Bath coach. The stops were a matter of arrangement with inn-keepers, who were generally sharers in the risks and profits of horsing the coaches, and a coachman who pulled up at the wrong house was looked upon as "giving away" his owners. But William, with a wink and a nudge to his box seat—a capital fellow, who from his knowledge of coaches and horses must have been one of the cloth—swung himself down, and responding to the mute invitation, the "box seat" followed him into a snug little room, where a foaming tankard and a prime round of beef awaited the faithless driver, while the inn waiters busily solicited orders from the thirsty passengers. A second foaming tankard speedily arrived for the coachman's friend; but there were no knives and forks. The want was speedily supplied from the coachman's capacious pocket. And then the box seat revealed himself. He was Mr. Chaplin, the chief proprietor of the

coach, of that and of many hundreds of other coaches, and of thousands of horses, the leviathan of those coaching days. He could have put up with a thumb bit, but the knife and fork was a little too stiff. They denoted a constant habit of knifing and forking at unauthorised places. And William had to seek another coach box, and was no more known on the old Bath road. It was by such attention to detail that Chaplin was enabled to pile up a handsome fortune by, coaching, while, instead of being ruined, he was vastly enriched by the advent of railways, founding the great carrying firm of Chaplin and Horne, and leaving a good name and splendid estate to his descendants.

Even as far as this and beyond stretched the wide expanse of waste all known as Hounslow Heath, which had for centuries been feared by travellers as the especial haunt of the highwayman. The road is really lonely after we leave the Corner, and a story or two of the brigands of other days would not come amiss. And at this moment we come in sight of a real old coaching house, the "Three Magpies"—birds that have hardly moulted a feather for all the changes of the times—and still well known to the beanfeasters of the period. It was a quarter of a mile beyond the "Magpies," just at the turn of the road there, that Jack Mellish was murdered about a century ago. Mellish, Bosanquet, and other eminent City men had gone down in the morning to hunt with the Royal buckhounds. The King hearing they were coming ordered out a specially good stag, and a capital run they had, and dined together jovially at the "Castle," Salthill; to drive home in the cool of the evening. Before the carriage reached the "Magpies" it was attacked by three armed footpads, and on Mellish showing some hesitation in giving up his purse he was shot through the head, while the ruffians decamped with their booty unmolested. Mellish was taken to the "Magpies," and died there in the course of the night, the surgeon who had been sent for from Hounslow having been stopped and robbed by the same gang.

Townsend and the other Bow Street runners pursued the trail of the gang in vain. The footpad, indeed, was more to be dreaded than the highwayman, being generally more desperate and truculent, while there was a kind of code of manners among the mounted fraternity, who held a much higher position. Thus Peter Pindar,

narrating the arrest of poor Sir Joseph Banks—on this very road, by the way, but nearer Hounslow—while gathering plants for his herbarium:

"Sirs, I'm no highwayman!" exclaimed the knight.

"No—there," rejoined the runners, "you are right,  
A footpad only."

Dr. Shelton was a famous practitioner along this road about the year 1732, a qualified surgeon and well connected, whom drink and extravagance had brought to the highway—an excellent fellow, always courteous to ladies, and who robbed with grace and discretion. Parsons, sometimes called the Hounslow Highwayman, was a later practitioner, the son of a baronet, a former Eton boy, aristocratically connected. He had served in the navy and in the army, had married a beautiful heiress, had spent her fortune in gambling, and now gambled away all he took on the highway. He came to Tyburn at last, deserted by all but his long-suffering wife.

We have all a sneaking kindness for the highwayman, such a picturesque figure as he is, when he rides forth in the dusk of evening on his bonny black mare, wrapped in his horseman's coat, with black wig, cocked hat, and crape mask. Yet there is death at his heart, a gallows in immediate prospect, and blank despair as to the future. Such was the mood of the novice, like one Barkwith, the son of a gentleman of fortune in the Isle of Ely, as he took to Hounslow Heath one November day, about four o'clock in the afternoon, hoping to replace some trust money he had borrowed to pay debts of honour, he being manager to a Chancery solicitor in Lincoln's Inn. He stopped a coach, the inmates emptied their pockets. Alas for him! there was among them only a handful of silver. He rode away overwhelmed, was pursued and captured, and was hanged within a month of his unlucky sally, making a penitent speech at Tyburn, and warning his hearers to "avoid the company of young gentlemen who belong to Inns of Court, who are the most wicked of any."

Another unlucky 'prentice hand essayed to stop my Lord Berkeley on Hounslow Heath, as in chaise and four his lordship was driving to his seat at Cranford. A servant rode up and shot the highwayman dead, who proved to be a genteel young fellow, a Welshman, who was learning some business in town. A more lucky fellow was Maclaine, of good Highland blood and the son of a minister, and the

brother of one who translated Mosheim's "Church History." He robbed Horace Walpole, when his pistol went off by accident, and afterwards Lord Eglinton on the Heath after a brisk running fight. The Earl recognised the man, but would not appear against him. He was a fine dashing fellow, who lodged in Pall Mall and kept good company. And he made an edifying end at Tyburn, much lamented.

A laughing, dashing highwayman was "Gentleman Harry"—one Simms, whose previous adventures might have sobered him. He had been transported, sold for a slave, a sailor, a privateersman, and finally a midshipman on a British man-of-war—and might have lived to be Admiral Simms. But this was too tame for Harry. He deserted, borrowed a saddle and bridle, stole a horse further on, and made for London along the Bath road. On the way he robbed a postchaise and the Bristol coach, and after that became a regular frequenter of the Heath. One day he robbed a Mr. Sleep, who grumbled at his loss.

"Why," said Harry, "if I hadn't robbed you there's two others waiting for you. But if you meet them say 'Thomas,' and they will let you pass."

Poor Mr. Sleep rode on bleating out "Thomas" to every one he met, and was nearly beaten for his pains by some gentlemen who felt themselves insulted. But when he explained matters they laughed, and guessed that he had met Gentleman Harry. And poor Harry met death even blithely at Tyburn Tree.

Bold ruffians, too, were Simpson and Stawkins, with their pal, Wilson, who stopped the Bristol mail, bound the post-boy who rode with it, and left him in a ditch just outside Colnbrook. But the Post Office tracked them out; Wilson turned King's evidence, and the other two suffered. After that an armed guard rode with the postboy. One of these very guards, a Dragoon, robbed the Bath stage on the road, and was hanged for it.

By the time mail coaches came in the mounted highwayman was practically extinct; but some clever fellows, four of them, robbed the Bristol mail in 1820. They booked the inside places on the night mail, and worked all the night through till they had opened the strong boxes under the seats which held the mail-bags, and extracted all valuable contents.

But Hounslow Heath comes to an end at last; we feel that we have passed it from the change in the landscape, and the softer tints of our surroundings. Purple hills rise on the distant horizon, and among masses of trees rises a village spire, with village roofs around it. And then the road declines into a kind of boundless watery plain, yet fertile and well planted with trees, while the road shows many turns and corners, with groups of tall old elms and warm tiled roofs among bridges and watercourses. In one of these pleasant corners is an old inn which bears the somewhat incomprehensible sign of the "Peggy Bedford."

"And who was Peggy, anyhow?" we may ask, as we pause for refreshment beneath the twin elms that form a shady porch to the old house.

Some workmen who have paused in the same shady refuge, and put down their baskets of tools, hear the question, and the eldest of the party replies:

"Ah! she was a good old soul was Peggy Bedford. And as for the coaching business they talk about, she was through it all. All the Windsor coaches, and the Bath coaches, and the coaches from everywhere come past here in her time, and Royalties, bless you, as thick as blackberries; and Peggy knowed 'em all, and they knowed Peggy, and had a pleasant word for her. There was one day," continued honest Ben, sinking his voice reverently, "'twas the time Her Majesty had her first infant, and they brought that babe along in a carriage-and-four—or perhaps 'twas six—and Peggy comes out and curtsies low, and the carriage pulls up, and the nuss—as was quite a real lady, mind you, so I've heard—she says, 'Here, Peggy, you shall hold the baby,' and put that 'ere blessed infant into Peggy's arms. And Peggy held that Royal infant in her arms, so she did."

In truth, Peggy was one of those brave souls such as these old coaching houses not unfrequently produced, as some of us who are becoming old stagers may remember in the sweet long ago. Excellent housewives, capable managers, accustomed to rule a train of servants and auxiliaries, regular and irregular, with tact that conciliated all ranks and classes, such women brought prosperity to the door, and would retain it as a permanent guest, till suddenly came the killing frost. Then the fine old coaching inns that had been as good an estate as the squire's were reduced to the status of a roadside



tavern on a deserted road. But some, like Peggy, bravely met the change, and piecing together fragments of their old extensive trade, kept up the reputation of the old house, and thanks to beanfeasts, club dinners, and the growing love of country excursions, ended bravely in the old arm-chair from which so long the old house had been ruled with kindly sway. Such was Peggy Bedford of the "King's Head," Longford, who died in 1859, and who is remembered by many of the villagers, and who thus forms a link between this present day and the old coaching age.

There are thatched cottages on the way, and bridges every hundred yards or so, for it is a little Holland that we have reached, intersected with the various channels of the River Coln, or Cole :

Cole, whose dark streams his flowery islands lave. But it is the Holland of the old Dutch landscapes, with stately chateaux and lofty groves rising above the placidly flowing streams, and a fine avenue of elms leads us right up to Colnbrook. Running streams are everywhere ; each pleasant little country house has its own little bridge, and its garden, perhaps, forms an island to itself, where you might bob for eels from your snug summer-house door. And here we meet with Joe the gardener, who has known the place for forty years, and is of opinion that Colnbrook must have been a wonderful fine place at one time. And doubtless so it was, and it is a wonderful old place now for any one who has an eye for such things. First there is the bridge which spans the deep but narrow main stream of the Coln, and which forms the division of the counties. Here in the centre one foot is in Middlesex and the other in Bucks. And, the bridge once crossed, you are in a very interesting old town, with memories that go back to some exciting episodes in English history.

Now, where did King John put up when he came this way to sign Magna Charta ? Why, at Colnbrook, to be sure, where they show you his palace to this day. And a very interesting old building it is ; now an inn called the "Star and Garter," a Tudor building as to its chief parts, but with foundations probably more ancient. And over the lush meadows, beyond the willows and the alders, flows Father Thames his stream, where Magna Charta Island divides his waves.

Our friend Joe, who has guided us to this interesting old house, here shakes his head. Ah, there's more wonderful things

in Colnbrook yet ! Did you ever hear of the copper where they boiled people ? Why, that was at the "Hospridge." The copper itself, alas, is gone, part of the old house has been pulled down, but the grand old chimney-stack yet remains at one end, where traditionally the fatal copper stood. The house to which the story attaches is the "Ostrich," a very nice old inn with a parlour of panelled oak as dark and mysterious as you please. And it is a very noble old house, now partly divided into shops and tenements, where Queen Elizabeth is said to have slept at times ; and she might very well have done so, for the house is earlier than her times. The foundation of it, in all probability, was one of the old guest houses, established on this great highway to the west, who can say when, but existing in 1106, when Mile Crispin gave to the Abbot of Abingdon "quoddam hospitium in via Londoniæ apud Colebroc"; and without drawing too heavy a draft upon credulity, it would be easy to imagine how the "Hospice" would be corrupted into "Ospige" or "Ostrich," and that hence came the sign—for the ostrich is an unfamiliar bird in the heraldry of signs. That would make it the most ancient hostel in England.

But where does the copper come in ? you will ask. Well, here is the story, as related in ancient chronicles, but even then of an uncertain date.

As early as the Plantagenets this was a great highway for the clothiers of the west, who came this way with their strings of pack-horses loaded with bales of cloth, and who departed with pouches stuffed with gold. And these jolly clothiers spent the night going and returning at the guest house, which is now the "Ostrich." There was no one to note when they came or went, but in time it came to be whispered among the clothiers that such a one had not been seen on the homeward journey after passing Colebridge. The truth was discovered by accident ; and here tradition comes in with a gruesome story of how mine host of the "Ostrich" had trapped these rich clothiers one after the other till the bodies of thirteen victims were on his hands, when he and his accomplices determined to throw them into the Thames. The use of the copper will here be manifest without further explanation. On the way to the river one of the bodies slipped out of the cart unperceived. Throwing them in one by one, and keeping count, there were twelve and no more. The murderers

looked at each other aghast, and began to dispute as to how the other body was to be accounted for. A Wraybury fisherman in his boat, who had been setting eelwheels, and, sheltered by bushes, had seen the whole affair, or anyhow had heard the twelve sullen splashes and the subsequent wrangle, here incautiously called out: "Chuck in one of yourselves to make good count." The murderers replied by a flight of arrows, one of which stuck in the boat. The fisherman rowed home unhurt, and next morning he sallied forth to Colnbrook and walked up the High Street carrying the arrow in his hand. "You have got my father's arrow," cried a little lad, a son of mine host, who was playing about the door of the inn. And in that way these foul murders were detected and the murderers brought to justice. But the copper remained as a monument for future ages.

But we have not yet exhausted the historical associations of Colnbrook. It was among these old inns that at Christmas, in the year 1400, there was a great gathering of nobles and chiefs who, at the head of forty thousand men, had declared for King Richard, and purposed to put down King Bolingbroke. They had marched up secretly and stealthily from the west, and seizing all the fords and ferries on the river had just missed catching the *de facto* King at Windsor, who, warned at the last moment, had fled with a few scared attendants to London. The City again proved itself the true king-maker. It stood firmly by Bolingbroke, and in a few days provided him with a respectable army, with which he marched out to Hounslow Heath, offering battle but not daring to attack the confederate lords in their strong position behind the Coln. The lords were confident enough, their forces outnumbered the King's, and Aumerle, the Duke of York's son, had promised to join them at Colnbrook by the "King's," or twelfth day. Then they heard of Aumerle's treachery, and fearing to risk a battle, they retreated. But one of the confederate Earls held the bridge over the Coln, with knights and men-at-arms to cover the retreat of the main body, and was fiercely attacked by Henry, who had been informed of the retreat of the confederate army. But the Earl held the bridge till nightfall, he and his faithful knights, and then rode off to join the rest, new beyond the reach of pursuit.

It would be a tight place for a fight at this present time, this little town of Coln-

brook, which gives the impression of having been built on a causeway at a time when solid ground was scarce, so closely do the houses crowd upon the roadway, which is wide enough for its present traffic, but must have been blocked pretty often in the good old days when a hundred coaches passed through it daily, with other vehicles almost beyond counting.

Beyond the town the road expands into wide, quiet loneliness, with old stables turned to barns, old inns to cottages; but ever and again we come upon a roadside pump, which is in itself a monument, tall iron pumps generally standing on a mound overlooking a wide sweep of country, farms, villages, country houses scattered here and there, larks warbling against each other high up in the blue, and the soft breeze humming in the telegraph wires overhead, while over there roars and vapours a Great Western train. An American friend is greatly impressed with those pumps. "Sir, you went one better than the Romans when you put up them pumps." And it is really a grand thing when you come to think of it, this great highway from east to west, with a pump every mile or so along its course. What nation but ours would have taken so much care for its horses and dumb animals in general? Some of the pumps are in ruins, but others so carefully padlocked that probably they are still sources of supply. And the milestones! Here is one half-hidden among the honeysuckle in the hedge, a handsome monolith, lichen-covered and half-illegible as to its inscriptions. But here is the date, 1741—why, the Pretenders were then looming large and the Guelphs uneasy on their throne, the troops were massed on Hounslow Heath, all the Continent was in confusion with wars and rumours of wars, and we went on tranquilly putting up milestones along the old Bath road.

## ROCKETS.

I OWN to a simple delight in fireworks. I enjoy intensely the "pyrotechnical exhibitions" of Mr. Brock, or even of humbler artists. I am not averse to those of home-made manufacture. I love everywhere and always their brilliant combinations and changes of colour; the coruscating radiance of golden stars; the glitter of many-tinted showers; the swift extension over wide spaces of air of

luminous breadths of azure, emerald, and crimson; the vivid contrasts as of an aurora. Then the swift rise of tongues of flame into "the empyrean" fills my humble mind with gratification. I seem rapt into a world of fairy, where the serpents flash on their undulating way; where the rockets mount upward with rapid flight; where plumes of fire unfold their shining feathers; where cascades of fiery rain descend from above; and Roman candles, and catherine-wheels, and all the rest of it mingle in the dazzling, bewildering show. I never see a crowd staring open-eyed at the marvels of a Crystal Palace Thursday night without the profoundest sympathy, and no doubt I often join them in the prolonged "Oh-h-h!" which hails each new development of the pyrotechnist's invention. Personally, of all the products of that invention I prefer the rocket. I confess to finding an ever new pleasure in the characteristic "swish" with which it goes aloft on its airy mission, in the suddenness with which it expends its concealed stores, and then falls back upon earth in silence. And being in my humble way a moralist, it sometimes recalls to my mind the lesson of "vaulting ambition," of attempt and failure, embodied in the popular phrase about "going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick." It is true there are several points of view from which a pyrotechnical exhibition might be made to yield to the philosopher some striking and perhaps useful analogies, but as I go to it for the frank purpose of enjoyment, I never care to disappoint myself by wandering off into dreary tracts of moralising. With the rocket, however, a moral association seems inevitably to suggest itself.

The fact is, the rocket display is not confined to gala occasions. Like the poor, 'tis for ever with us. Going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick is a daily performance with which most of us—some, I fear, from actual experience—are well acquainted. It takes place, perhaps, in our family, or at all events among our friends, and we hail each repetition, like the Crystal Palace crowd, with a long-drawn "Oh!" When brought by stress of circumstance, and not originating in crass vanity or ill-considered ambition, it is impossible not to sympathise with failure, because, who knows?—one day it may befall ourselves. I am reminded of those poor Scotch youths whom the injudicious partiality of their parents forces

into the ministry, though they are without a shred of qualification. Lo, one day, the neophyte rises in the pulpit to preach his "trial sermon." His tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth—in vain he racks his brains for an idea—and, after stammering out a few incoherent sentences, he sits down with the brand upon him of "a stickit minister." Mrs. Oliphant has more than once described this melancholy failure. For such our pity is forthcoming. So is it also for the young versifier, who is happy in his secret worship of the Muse, until one day he reveals his occupation to foolish friends, who urge him to print and publish. In a few weeks appears a volume of "Verses on Various Occasions," or "May-weeds and May-flowers," or "Tortures of the Heart," and the luckless creature finds himself the sport and laughter of unfeeling critics. Such failures as these, however, are hardly "rockets." They never get off the ground, but smoulder and fizzle away in impotent effort. They are the failures of feebleness and humility, not of inept vanity or exaggerated egotism, and gods as well as men compassionate them.

But let us turn to Mr. Windbag Bounceby, the rich contractor of Gotham. Gifted with an almost inexhaustible fund of conceit, and an inordinate restlessness of temper, he takes what is called a "leading part" in local affairs. He talks incessantly of "economy" and "efficiency," finds out every little item of what he thinks municipal waste, loses no opportunity of proclaiming his sympathy with "my friends and brother-workmen," and at length rises to the Mayor's chain of office. During the next twelvemonth, he gives good "feeds," figures as a large subscriber to all well-advertised schemes and charities, perhaps procures the town the honour of a Royal visit, and is rewarded by his grateful fellow-citizens with an invitation to stand for the borough at the next election. He accepts, and his local influence carries the seat. With a flourish of trumpets from his toadies, he starts off to London, is duly introduced to the Speaker, shakes hands with him, and at once prepares to justify the sanguine predictions of his Gotham friends. Alas, what a miserable collapse! His empty disconnected platitudes will not do in the House of Commons. The rocket which went up with such celerity has come down with equal swiftness—and there lies the stick.

Then there is young Augustus Mummer.

Not long ago he figured in private circles as a great tragedian. He belonged to half-a-dozen amateur clubs, and by dint of assiduous self-assertion contrived to monopolize the leading rôles. He was ready at any time, if he were offered the principal part, to play for charities or at private entertainments. His conversation invariably took on a theatrical flavour. He was learned—at least he said so—in the art of making-up. He knew, or professed to know, the leading London “pros,” speaking of them with a pleasant familiarity. He would tell you that he had been to see Blank in his great part the other night, but was quite disappointed. “My dear fellow, he’s not in it; doesn’t feel it from first to last. If he hadn’t been written up by his hired hacks, he’d have long ago gone to smash. Just come down to the Thespian next Saturday and see me play it. I flatter myself I can show Blank the way, with something to spare.” There were certain of Mummer’s admirers who declared him equal to Irving. Others affirmed that he could give odds to Willard; while others protested that he came up to the good old Macready standard—of which, as Macready ceased playing before they were born, their knowledge must have been supernatural. At last he got himself engaged to play the leading part in a new drama produced at a *matinée*. He ranted and strutted, he mopped and mowed, but his exertions were useless. The audience detected his incapacity, and received him with fatal coldness, until his complacent egotism, combined with his conspicuous ineptitude, provoked his hearers into wrath, and amid a scene of “indescribable confusion”—as the papers say after a column of description—the curtain fell. The rocket went up with a splutter, and came down with a stick.

One sees a good deal of this rocket business in the financial world. You knew Robinson some time ago, as, perhaps, a clerk in a stockbroker’s office. Suddenly you hear of him as living in a big house in a big square at the West End. He has the reputation of being a millionaire; has made a great coup with the Patent Grindstone Company; gives grand balls and dinners, and at a garden party the other day was honoured with the presence of a Royalty. A few months, and the big house is shut up, the Patent Grindstones grind no more, and the Royalty has forgotten that there ever was a Robinson; and the

Lord Chief Justice, in an action brought against the ci-devant stockbroker’s clerk, transfixes him with two or three sarcasms in his best manner. The rocket went up with brilliant effect; but, alas, it has come to the usual end of rockets! In literature, or art, or fashion, the issue is always the same. There is nothing permanent about your rockets; they last no longer than a professional agitator’s vogue. Better to burn steadily like a farthing candle, or Price’s night-lights, than to go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. Yet I confess there is nothing attractive in the glimmer of a farthing candle, and the splendour of one of Price’s night-lights is undoubtedly confined to a limited area; so that the flashing, sparkling, soaring rocket has much the best of it to the eye, and will always prove, I fear, the most attractive. The young, when they see it cleaving the air like a lightning-flash, do not mind them of the fugitiveness of its brilliant career; do not, unfortunately, remember the stick. How should they, nowadays, when there is such a blaze and din of fireworks all around; when the walkin—to soar into poetry—is everywhere bright with their reflected lustre; when competing and contending rockets jostle against one another, and play the very deuce with sobriety of judgement? In Vanity Fair we are all for the present; the past is as if it had never been, and the future is as if it never would be. So the fireworks will continue to dazzle with their beautiful, fascinating play of colours; and in spite of reason and experience, we shall applaud with all our might and main, as we gaze upon the delusive, bewildering flight upwards of those fated Rockets.

## WASHING-DAY ON A WESTERN RANCH.

THERE is no excitement to be looked for in this article; nothing of the wild joy and freedom of Western life; nothing of the boundless prairie, with its rolling bluffs; nothing of mountain cañons or snowy peaks, which lie white beneath the burning sun all the year round. This is merely a full, true, and particular account of a day’s work upon a Western ranch, written from a woman’s point of view, and being a record of all she had to do in it.

As a rule I have wished to look at my

Western life from its outdoor aspect, in fact, I think, most people do so, and so much is said and written about its freedom from petty care, of the enjoyment of 'loping for miles upon a broncho over a vast prairie flaming with many-coloured blossoms, of the berry expeditions in the fall, and the many social gatherings in the way of dime parties and basket dances in the winter, that people who only hear of the life from this one point of view forget that there is quite another way of looking at it, and begin to think it is all a huge joke and everlasting picnic amongst most picturesque scenery, day in, day out.

But, as a matter of fact, there is plenty of work to be done, and only one pair of hands, as a rule, to do it. Even a little four-roomed wooden shanty is not to be kept clean and tidy without some trouble, and, therefore, I am going to beg for patience, patience for a whole day's record of ranch house-work. I am afraid it will seem very slow and commonplace, but where you can get no house help it is just as much a part, and sometimes a very important part, too, of the life out West as "cutting out" cattle, or camping in mountain parks. This shall be an account, too, of the day I used to find the hardest in the week, namely, washing-day.

I must premise, to begin with, that when I first joined my brothers upon their ranch I had very little practical knowledge of household affairs. I certainly held a school of cookery certificate; could make clear soup, jellies, curry, and other made dishes; but of baking, washing, churning, cleaning grates and knives, I was profoundly ignorant. I thought that the greater cookery included the less, and that nothing could be easier than to roast and boil, but my ideas received a cruel shock when I learnt that the Western beef gave so little dripping that it was far too valuable to be wasted upon basting meat, and that it was the custom to pour water into the baking-tin and baste your joint with that! And as for the weekly wash, I hated it; no other word can describe my feelings upon the subject; and although in time it became far easier to me than it did at first, I never saw Monday come round without a feeling of horror. Still, it had to be done, and there was no one else to do it, and it would not have been fair to the boys to have put it out at a dollar and a half a dozen. I must do them the credit to say that they offered, and were willing to do so, but my pride

would not allow me to say yes. I had come out to be a help, and not a hindrance, and what other women could do I could.

Still, the poor fellows had something to put up with in the beginning, I must own, although they took it all most good-naturedly.

First of all, with the very best intentions in the world, I boiled their flannel shirts till they were very nice and clean, beautifully clean, I will say that for myself. For the rest, suffice it to say that the said shirts, after having been submitted to my kind operations, were given away to a small boy of ten, whom they fitted very comfortably indeed. I remember now my grief at their shrinkage, in fact I believe I wept bitterly, but the boys were very good and kept the matter a profound secret.

One lives and learns, and in time I washed very respectably, but one thing "bested" me to the last, and that was the starched things; so I used to make yeast, at which I was very successful, for a neighbour, in return for which she would starch up the boys' collars and cuffs four times a year, which, as they only wore them to go to church or Denver, was sufficiently often. As for me, I wore lace. I could manage to get that up very decently, and did without collars and cuffs, dearly as I loved them, till my return to civilisation.

Monday was the universal washing-day on all the ranches, and this custom had its advantages, as no one was likely to come and see you. Many people, however, when they had blankets to wash would do that upon a Sunday, as then the men were available to help, and washing blankets is exceptionally heavy work for a woman single-handed. The men-folk upon a ranch were, as a rule, during the summer months, far too busy to lend much of a helping hand in house-work. My boys, I must say, were very good in the helping line. I only had to kill and pluck a chicken three times all the months I was in the States, and I should not have done that only it had been forgotten, and the boys were coming home hungry and there was nothing else for them to eat. So I did it in despair, and I think I suffered more than the poor fowls did.

As Monday was washing-day it necessitated Saturday being a very heavy day for me, as I had not only the Sunday to cook for, but Monday also had to be provided for, and bread had to be baked to last over the three days. I am afraid Monday's

menu was never a very varied one; it consisted of a pie or stew, according to the time of year, and a fruit tart. Cream, butter, and eggs we had plenty of; there was usually also a ham in cut, and some cold meat left from Sunday's joint, so we managed to get through the day without any extra cooking. Sometimes, indeed, if I felt very energetic, or the weather was cold, I would cook up something hot for supper, but I was usually, on washing-days, far too "dog-gone tired," as the Western saying goes, and would be too glad to creep off to bed after supper, for on those days the boys always washed-up for me. So the preparations for the weekly wash always began on Saturday, on which day, too, I would alice up a bar or two of soap into fine shavings, and putting them upon the fire with a little water, make a jelly of them. Then on Sunday evening the boys would pull up the water for me and fill the tubs, and I would put the clothes in to soak all night, with a plentiful supply of the soap jelly. This particular June night I am writing about seemed a shorter night than usual. I felt as if I had only just gone to bed and closed my eyes when I heard the boys give a shout to wake me; it was four in the morning and bright sunshine as usual.

It was Jack's turn to fetch the cows in for milking from the buck pasture, for at that time we were making thirty dollars a month by milking for a creamery, and I heard him go off to the corral to fetch his horse; the two dogs barking round him as he did so, whilst the four a.m. train rushed past upon the Santa Fé track, rocking the shanty as it flew by. All the world seemed to be awake; it was clearly no use to try and sleep again, and presently came the creaking of the buckets in the well, and the splash of water as Charlie, whose turn it was to see to the house chores, was filling the kettle and wash-boiler. The crackling of wood, too, was heard in the stove; the fire was evidently lighted. It was Monday morning, and washing-day, and it was going to be a steaming hot day, too, so the sooner I got to the work on hand the better.

When I entered the kitchen the fire was roaring up the stove pipe, steam was beginning to come out of the boiler, and to my joy the kettle also was on the bell. I promptly made some coffee and cut bread-and-butter. We always had "little breakfast" before we did the morning's work; the boys liked something before

milking, and to tell the truth I was also glad of a cup of coffee before I set to work. By the time the coffee was ready they came in, and after being fed they each took up a couple of milking-buckets and went off to the corral.

Then the wash began; the boiler was dosed with a liberal supply of the soap jelly, or ley, as it was called, and all the first lot of things that had been put in soak overnight were wrung out, and rubbed up and down, with the aid of soap and cold water, upon a wooden washboard, then put through the wringer again and consigned to the boiler, where they were allowed to boil for about twenty minutes in the soapy water. The twenty minutes over, they were fished out with the aid of the axe-handle, blued in two waters, wrung out, and then carried off to the clothes-line, or rather wire, which required to be well wiped down before you pegged out your clean things, for fear of rust.

Those June mornings were lovely, and no mistake; the time would be about half-past six, the sun was well up, but not vertical, the sky was of the deepest blue, with tender little fleeces of white lying across it here and there; a gentle breeze, blowing straight off the snowy range, was waving the tops of the cottonwoods and willows upon the creek backwards and forwards; it even would flap the damp white linen I was hanging out on to my face, leaving a grateful coolness, for it was rather hot in the kitchen with a roaring stove. All was quite still around in spite of the breeze; one could hear the cattle lowing in the corral, and catch the quick swish, swish of the milk as it fell, warm and foaming, into the bright tin pails, which gleamed like silver in the rays of the sun. At my feet, in the drying-ground, there would be, at this time of the year, countless little rose-trees about two feet high, covered with pale pink buds and blossoms, whilst morning glories twined round the drying-posts, and sometimes would even invade the clothes-wire, and have to be torn ruthlessly away. Down by the irrigated ditch, which divided the drying-ground from the corn-patch, stood a perfect forest of giant sunflowers, whilst in the extreme background Pike's Peak reared his snowy head far above the dark and rugged Foot Hills into the sky.

I could always fain have stayed and enjoyed the cool of the morning's air till breakfast-time, but with that interesting meal to get, and a big wash on, the luxury of

having a lazy time could not be indulged in, and so I turned reluctantly back to the hot little kitchen and the big boiler. Just in time, too, for the stove was getting very low—the worst of a wood fire is that it requires such constant watching and stoking—and the boiler was “off the boil.”

However, that was a matter that could be soon put to rights; a few logs put on and the dampers pulled out, and the flames were roaring all over the top of the stove again, and I hastened to get another boilerful of things on before breakfast. The things were taken out of soak and rubbed against the washboard like the former ones, but before they were put in the boiler, it received the addition of—I hope this fact will shock no one—a full tablespoonful, perhaps even two, of paraffin. This custom I first heard of with a great feeling of repugnance; it seemed such a nasty liquid to put into a washing-boiler full of nice clean clothes. But the effect of the paraffin is, in fact, most cleansing, and does not leave any odour attaching to the things, and although I usually washed my first boilerful with soap only, I always added the paraffin to the second, and found it cleared the things so beautifully that my insular prejudice soon wore off, and I would not have washed without it for worlds, it saved so much labour in the way of rubbing.

Next it would be time to be thinking of getting breakfast ready, and as the kitchen was like a small furnace, I would set the table in the verandah on the shady side of the shanty. So I made fresh coffee and put half-a-dozen eggs on to boil—breakfast on washing-days was never a very sumptuous repast—laid the table, and fetched the ham, bread, butter, and cream out of the dairy. As there was a good fire, and the bread would be by this time a little stale, I would usually make a rack of toast, and when the boys returned get them to open a can of stewed plums, for we always had fruit in some shape or form at breakfast. The boys had, by this time, had their morning tub in the creek, and were quite ready for some food. Certainly we had had coffee and bread-and-butter earlier, but we had been up and working hard ever since four, and wanted something more substantial. After breakfast, which took about half an hour, the boys had their first pipe, whilst I ran in and did the rooms and put fresh logs upon the fire. Then, while they emptied and re-

filled the tubs for me, I cleared away and washed-up. Of course, busy as I was, it would have been much more convenient to have put the dirty things aside and to have had one wash-up of crockery at the end of the day.

But alas! we had not too many dollars to spare, so had to begin with as little in the way of plates and dishes as we could well do with, so washing-up had to be the rule after every meal.

That being done, I started on the washing again, whilst the boys were drawing water to fill the great zinc tank, in which the long, narrow cylinders of milk were kept to raise the cream properly. This process meant the drawing up of seven-and-twenty buckets of water twice a day in summer, and, as it may be supposed, took some little time to do, although there was a water-trough laid down from the well, which with the shanty stood upon higher ground, to the dairy, the water in the tank being let off down some still lower ground. By the time they had finished I had my second boilerful of clothes out, the first being perfectly dry and deposited in a basket to await sprinkling and folding.

The boiler was then refilled for the third time—it took several bucketfuls to do it, too—and plenty of paraffin was added for the last lot of things, which comprised all the rougher elements of our wash, such as kitchen-cloths, etc. These I never troubled to rub at all, they were soaked overnight, wrung out, and the paraffin did all the rest; it was certainly a most wonderful cleansing medium! The boys had long ago departed to the corn-patch, so whilst the last lot of things were boiling—and I always gave them a liberal allowance of time—I laid out a clean dress ready to be put on for dinner, for the last, and almost the heaviest part of the day's work had yet to be done.

The things were taken out, blued, and hung out to dry whilst the boiler was filled up again, with, of course, plenty of soap and the ever-useful paraffin. En passant, I may mention that out West paraffin is considered a great curative agent, and that the Western remedy for rheumatism is to sleep in sheets saturated with the oil. I believe it is wonderfully good for the complaint, too, although people have been heard to say that the remedy must be worse than the disease. To return to my day's work. The tubs had now to be emptied, and turned on to their

sides to dry; presently there would have to be a bucketful of water put into each, to prevent the wood from warping in the fierce sun.

Then everything was turned out of the kitchen whilst with the aid of some of the water from the boiler the shelves and tables were scrubbed down, and also the great square of zinc upon which the stove stood, till it shone like silver. Hot work this, but what was to come was still hotter, for the outer kitchen in which the wash had taken place had to be scrubbed down with the remainder of the boiling water.

Do not fancy from my use of the word "scrub" that I was going down on my hands and knees to use a scrubbing-brush; I merely tilted the contents of the boiler on to the floor, then rubbed the soapy water up and down with a hard brush, finally sweeping it all out of doors.

Then the same process had to be gone through again with some cold water this time, and I will say when it was all done my floor looked beautifully white. Then I put the kettle on to boil again for the everlasting coffee, and laid the table for dinner in the verandah. The next thing to be thought of was personal comfort, which meant a tub in the creek, and I quickly undressed and got into a bathing-dress, and, wrapping a dust cloak round me, trotted off to our bath-room. Oh, how deliciously cool it was in the water under the shade of the cottonwoods! The very water-snakes felt nice and icy as they curled round one's limbs, for I had been so hot all that morning that I would have liked to stay in the creek all day if only I could have had my dinner brought me; but that was not to be thought of, so I hastened back. Then, with clean clothes and a clean print dress I felt a new creature and much refreshed, ready even to cope with the horrid flies, the summer pest of the country. For they had covered the dinner-table, the white cloth was black with them, and they sat upon the serviette rings a dozen thick; clearly we should have no peace once the food appeared under present circumstances. What was I to do? The little kitchen was out of the question, it felt like a small Inferno. Suddenly an idea struck me; why not dine in the dairy? It was cool enough, for it was in two storeys, and the lower part, which was used for that purpose, was built of stone, and for the sake of the milk the holes in the wall which did duty for windows had fly-netting nailed over them. I soon had the

table spread. It was deliciously cool, if rather dark, and not a fly was to be seen.

As for the food, it was there already. A veal and ham pie, a tart of peaches, and a dish of thick yellow custard, also some cucumber. All cold, of course; but we managed to make a very fair meal, and the coolness of our novel feeding-room was delightful after all the heat we had all of us been exposed to in one way or the other. After the dinner-things were washed-up I laid down for an hour or so, but not longer, as the boys were so busy they wanted me to take the cream into town for them. So about three I got up again, went and fetched the last lot of clothes in, folded and sprinkled them well ready for the morrow's ironing. Then, as I knew I should not be back till late, and must bake as well as iron next day, I set a pan of dough and conveyed it to the dairy to keep cool during the night, as the shanty was far too hot, and would sour it before morning. The day's work for me was nearly at an end now. Going into town with the cream would be a rest; at five we would have tea. From four to five was a pretty hard day for me, and I felt very tired, and was glad to hear the boys driving the cattle into the corral for milking after tea. Tea was no very lengthy meal, the boys were anxious to be off, and to tell the truth, so was I; they soon had the cart round, and the great cream can lifted in, and with many injunctions to bring back the cream money, and not to forget some tobacco, they saw me safely over the Santa Fé track, Charlie running up to say: "Hang the expense, old girl, let's have a couple of bottles of Lager for supper." Jack more prudently shook his head—beer at a shilling the bottle was rather an expensive luxury—but Charlie flung a couple of quarters into my lap, and with a last "Now, don't you forget that beer!" I drove off.

It was getting cooler already; the sun was nearly low down on the horizon, although there was not much breeze as yet; up in the sky, far away, soared a great hawk, swooping towards my chicken-house in search of an evening's meal; how glad I was that the fowls were all safely shut up! Towards the Devil's Head and Wild Cat Mountains one could hear the coyotes beginning to howl. The long, hot June day was drawing to its close, and I hurried up, for I did not want to be very late in town. When the manager of the creamery came to take my can, he paid me for the



last month's cream, and to my joy the money came to thirty-five dollars, five in excess of what we usually got. This would make fifteen to bank, for we always kept the household expenses down to twenty dollars a month; how very pleased the boys would be! Then I went on to the drug store, where I got the mail, tobacco, and Charlie's Lager, also expended a few cents upon butter-nut candy for myself. Most of the Western women chewed gum, but I did not like it much. On to the dry goods store next, where I laid in our month's provisions, and to my joy found E. engaged in doing the same thing, so we could drive home together.

Shopping in a store was always a very leisurely proceeding—the store itself was half-full of quarry-men, smoking cigars and buying boots—but as soon as we entered our obliging friend, the store-keeper, after we had duly shaken hands, attended to us, at the same time offering us a glass of cider, which, as we were very thirsty, we gladly accepted, though it was rather a sour compound. Also, as we were two ladies driving alone, he added to his kindness by carrying our parcels out and putting them into the buggy, unhitching our horses, and seeing us start off safely. It was nine o'clock and as bright as day, and as we left the little town behind us and ploughed down and up the sandy bank of the Platte—for river, save a few inches of water in the middle of its bed, there was none—all the trees and fences cast such long, strange shadows in front of us that our respective steeds took to shying, till I really thought E.'s buggy, which was an exceptionally light one, would upset. As we drove side by side, whenever the ups and downs of the prairie-road would let us, E. informed me that not only had she washed that day, but had ironed and baked as well, and I felt very envious, for, try as I would, I never could attain to doing more than wash in one day, for when that was over I felt far too tired to attempt anything else. So we drove on, chatting as we went, the cool breeze that always, in Colorado, no matter how hot the day has been, comes down across the mountains about nine in the evening, fanning our faces, till we had to part company and I went on alone, enjoying the beauty of the perfect moonlight night, so bright that I could see to read my letters.

The air was full of the stillness of night, a coyote howl and a prairie-owl hoot being

almost the only sounds to be heard. Twice the stillness was broken by the shriek of a mountain lion prowling on Dawson Mountain, and three times by cattle-horns blown on one or the other of the two railway tracks, as a train rushed by upon the gleaming rails, leaving two trails behind it, one of glowing embers along the line, and one of flame and lurid smoke across the star-spangled sky.

But I was rather tired, and glad when the shanty was reached to see it lighted up. The boys were home and had set supper. I felt I only wanted bed and nothing to eat, but when I got in and saw everything looking so cheerful I began to think I would like some supper also, so we had quite a little festival over the home letters and the Lager beer.

After that we were all glad to get off to bed, and oh! the relief of getting one's clothes off and lying down in the darkness and silence, whilst the occasional shrieks of the trains as they rushed past the shanty only seemed to mingle with my dreams, for they were both going "back East," that is to say, homewards.

## ON KALI'S SHOULDER.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By JOHN AYSCOUGH.

### CHAPTER I.

IT was not a swagger bungalow, but it suited us—Sir Benjamin and me—for it was inexpensive, and we belonged to the Staff Corps. There are, of course, many officers who belong to the Staff Corps because they prefer it to the Cavalry, the Line, the Household Troops, or the Royal Regiment of Artillery, just as there are persons who travel third-class solely on account of the dustiness and stuffiness of first, and never take hansoms because they can get so much more fresh air on the tops of omnibuses.

But the Baronet and I do not belong to that lofty class of persons, and our adhesion to the Staff Corps is rather due to Providence than to any overmastering preference of our own. It may, perhaps, allay suspicion as to the sincerity of this statement if I explain at once that Sir Benjamin is not actually in the enjoyment of either Baronetcy or Knighthood. But his name, really, is Brodie, and in so humorous a corps as that to which he was gazetted on leaving Sandhurst it was

inevitable that he should be nicknamed in allusion to the late illustrious physician his namesake. And to the Staff Corps this nickname followed him. For short, however, one usually called him "Ben"; "Sir Benjamin" and "the Baronet" being a thought too prolix for daily use.

As for myself, I have little hope of ever being called Lascelles again—at all events by my male acquaintance. For it was my misfortune to share a bungalow at Poona, when I first came out, with a subaltern of the senseless name of Box—and Cox has stuck to me ever since.

Our bungalow looks out across the maidan to the Sepoy lines, and the A. A. G.'s is next door to it, so if you know anything of Katara you know which it is. On the side away from the lines the road skirts our compound—the road, par excellence, of Katara, leading everywhere; to the church; to the gymkhana;\* to the "racecourse," where we play polo; to the Residency; to our mess-bungalow; and to the bazaar.

When we took it the bungalow had been empty some time. Its last occupant was known as Ananias, his other name being De Vescl. He died of abscess of the liver, and his grave is the one under the peepul-tree just by the vestry door. Besides having liver disease he had gone mad about the natives. He considered that they had souls, and, in his opinion, they were cleaner and better-looking on the whole than Europeans of the same class. He spent most of his time poking about in the half-ruinous temples among the hills towards Mahableshtar; and he knew five Mahratti dialects as well as I know the Royal Warrant for pay and promotion. He was as thick as thieves with "the Rajah," too, and often spent hours with him in the palace, conversing in Mahratti, and otherwise forgetting himself in the most un-English manner.

Now, the ancient kingdom of Katara has been abolished for a quarter of a century and more, and the Rajah, whose time is spent in drinking up his pension from Her Majesty, however royal he may be "de jure," is nothing more than Pertab Singh, Esquire, "de facto," and should be treated accordingly.

Whereas the late Captain de Vescl called him Rajah Sahib to his face, and behaved in all respects as if the fort were still full of Mahratti troops, and there were no British cantonment by the Sepoy lines on the road to Towli, so he died of abscess of the liver, and we took his bungalow. It contained, when we took it over, a little black-wood furniture, a large consignment of white ants, and one or two old elephant-trunks full of papers. These last were chiefly exercise-books full of closely-written exercises in the half-dozen Mahratti dialects with which poor de Vescl had muddled his intellect. There were also a few washing-books, some army forms, and a bundle or so of mess bills.

As the bungalow was supposed to be completely furnished, it is right to mention that we were also provided with a gloomy smell, suggestive of a badly-aired coffin, which perhaps first put it into poor De Vescl's head to die at three-and-thirty.

It naturally annoyed me when the Baronet began to monopolise a large portion of that attention which I had previously devoted to myself.

It had never occurred to me to consider him of any serious consequence; and any significance his existence possessed seemed to be derived from his position in reference to myself. I took him for granted as a simple providential arrangement for paying half the rent of my bungalow.

It was natural, therefore, that I should feel it when he set up for himself, so to speak.

And there was something peculiarly irritating in his adopting that particular line.

"Cox, my boy, are you thinking of your mother's grave?"

It was not Brodie who made the enquiry, in a tone of cheerful banter little suited to its tenor. It was Snelgrove—Captain the Honourable Plantaganet Snelgrove, third son of the Earl of Marshalsea, who commands the detachment of British troops.

We were at a picnic, on the top of the hill called Kali's Shoulder, as one goes by the hill-road to Mahableshtar. The sun was announced to set in about ten minutes, and that's what we were waiting for.

"Tea" was over, and cheroots had recommenced; a few men were hanging round the place where the food had been, as though loth to face the idea that there was no more vermouth to be got; and the ladies were being climbed up the rocks

\* In the spelling of native words I plead guilty to following no consistent plan. Where there is a traditional English form it seems to me most sensible to use that—"bangla" would never suggest a bungalow to the British reader. In other cases I am swayed to and fro by correctness and phoneticism.

by the more energetic youths of the party.

Mrs. Farmer-Copear, the doctor's wife, was murmuring soft nothings to Snelgrove's subaltern, one Penguin, who appeared much terrified by her amenities. And Snelgrove himself was eating a belated cake that had not been cleared away in time by the bearers; we were both lying on our stomachs about four feet from a sort of precipice. Over the brim of the precipice one could see ever so far away over nallahs and low hills, to great towering ghats that built themselves up into the sky towards Mahableshwar. To our left the fort-like hills fell away towards the lowlands of the Konkan.

"Cox, old chap, are you thinking of your mother's grave?"

"Last mall she was nicely, thank you."

"Ah, yours, no doubt, is a long-lived family; she must be a very aged woman," observed Snelgrove kindly, aware of my desire to be thought extremely young.

"You seemed pensive," he added explanatorily. "What's up?"

"I was thinking at the moment of the Baronet. I am displeased with him."

"It is hard bringing them up. Look at Penguin now—he's blanched with terror. It's hard to have to explain everything to the young."

He jerked his head towards Mrs. Farmer-Copear, who was endeavouring to make Penguin understand that he ought to take her up the rocks to look at that sunset.

Penguin was, however, at that time a very young officer, "our last importation of Europe goods," and not up to our simple ways. He had been rather religiously brought up, and thought Mrs. Farmer-Copear meant it. Besides, he was only nine stone four and a half, and the prospect of hauling thirteen stone odd up that cliff puzzled him.

"What's Sir Benjamin about?" Snelgrove enquired with chastened interest.

"What, indeed! Bothered if I know."

I drew my cheroot from my lips and smothered a small beast, who had jumped into the neighbourhood, with the hot ashes.

"It's my belief that bungalow is haunted. Why should they both go the same way? Poor Ananias, I mean, and now Brodie."

"Cox, don't ask me to believe the Baronet has abscess of the liver; think of his breakfasts."

"I've nothing to do with his health. If

he had abscess of the liver I should never throw it in his teeth. He's going wrong in other ways."

We got up and strolled off towards the craggy ridge where the sunset was on view.

"Not the Albatross!" exclaimed Snelgrove, with Asiatic languor, perhaps, but really British feeling.

"Anything but; he's not at all amorous, and you know she discountenances subalterns. No; it's all that bungalow. He was sane enough before. I expect it's hypnotised."

"Very likely. Do look at the Albatross even now, spreading her wings over Barlow."

Miss Gillingham, the Resident's sister, was a very large make of lady, and very white and downy. Not in appearance only, but in manner also, she suggested the majestic bird after which Katara named her.

Captain Barlow was seated at her feet. From below she appeared about to grasp him in her claws, and float serenely out with him over the precipice into space.

"How inattentive you are! I want to tell you about the Baronet."

"Do you think it will bore me, though?" he enquired solemnly anxiously.

"I don't care if it does—I would prefer it. Just keep quiet and listen. It's been going on some weeks; it began just before the rains stopped. And it began 'right away,' as the Yankees say. One day we were in our bungalow alone together, and, though I had been playing the violin for nearly three hours, Sir Benjamin seemed bored and 'désœuvré.'"

"What?"

"French, old chap; short of a job, you know. Well, all of a sudden he sat down by the side of a huge old elephant-trunk that had belonged to poor Ananias, and began rummaging in it. Ever since that he's gone wrong."

We had now reached the top of the ridge, and the sunset was in full swing.

The Asiatic sunset is quite different from the Europe article in the same department. It begins with a header, and the patterns are much louder.

At our feet the ghats fell sharply away for two or three thousand feet, step by step, till they flattened themselves into the narrow plain of the Konkan; but, of course, we could see only what was just beneath us—a wide gorge, out of which the darkness was climbing quickly up to

cover us. Over against us were higher ghauts, and behind them higher ones yet, red ones, standing round the sky in a stiff row; these were, of course, artificial, cloud-ghauts, but they seemed far lumpier and better made than the already mystic, glooming ranges at their knees. Then a line of sea-green 'sky, and a ridiculously unlikely row of smaller cloud-mountains with a neat, straight edge at the bottom, but very Alpine tops; over them a yellow belt of sky, and the blue dome. Only the colours of an Indian sunset alter while you wait. The dye is swished on with swifter boldness and ruder gradation, until, all of a sudden, the black curtains are hastily dragged before the gaudy work, and only through its tiny rents does any colour show.

"And now for the snakes," Barlow is saying affably to his charmer, who looms bigger and whiter than ever through the dusk.

"Are there snakes?" she enquires, with a languid affectation of surprise and alarm that would not deceive a baby. Miss Gillingham has been in India ten years, but she affects all the ignorance of a new arrival. She annually discusses the Academy as if she'd seen it, and always has a bound catalogue and pencil with her favourite pictures marked.

Barlow provides her with the most consolatory statistics. Of the eighty thousand who die annually in India from snake-bite, it appears, from the Captain's statement, that about one-twelfth are residents of a fifty-mile radius whose centre is Katara.

"Ah, but they are all natives," replies the lady, quite unmoved, and with a complacency that argues a singular grasp of the Anglo-Indian question.

"Not at all. The natives in these ghauts hardly ever die from snake-bite. They're all inoculated for it when they're butehas. It's the Sahib-log who never recover."

Miss Gillingham had an instinctive sense that her perky little cavalier wanted to frighten her, and in her slow way she was displeased.

"If you're really alarmed I'll carry you," she said calmly.

And there could be no doubt she might have done so had she wished.

It was almost dark, as dark as it meant to be all night. And it was time to start home. Mrs. Farmer-Copear had already disappeared into the gloom of the narrow mountain-road that led down to Katara,

with Penguin as far from her as he could get. There were perhaps a score of us; two and two mostly, in Noah's ark order—male and female after their kind. But Snelgrove and I were over, and we brought up the rear a hundred yards or so behind the Judge and Mrs. Second in Command. Some of the party had bearers with lanterns to go before them, but we took our chance of the snakes, supported by a trust in Providence, and a calculation that any snakes we might tread on in the dark must be reptiles of peculiar sweetness of disposition not to have already bitten the bare-legged natives, or the Sahib-log that had preceded us.

"From the day he began rummaging those papers he's been on the wrong tack; he's as thick with the Rajah as poor Ananias was—and before this affair he'd as soon have chummed up with his sweeper. And he's got another native acquaintance, too."

I paused to light a fresh cheroot; we stood still, and the voices of the party ahead sounded strange in the utter loneliness of the mountain-side; to our right the ever-growing bulk of Kali's Shoulder, to our left the black depths of the nallah; and everywhere the mystery of the secret night.

"How do you know he has chummed up with the Rajah?"

As the light of my match fell on his face I saw that Snelgrove was listening. When one is being told of British officers being on terms with the likes of Pertab Singh it is time to listen.

"My dear chap, how long is it since the Baronet was at polo? How long does he stay at the Gymkhana nowadays? Where have you met him in the cantonment lately? He must be somewhere. And where does he go? Where was he this afternoon?"

Down the steep hill-path we went; the stones we kicked aside falling suggestively a few hundred feet or so into the darkness.

"Two or three times I know he has been at the 'Palace'; many more times I suspect it. And fancy Benjamin learning that hill-Mahratti that Ananias went in for—Benjamin, if you please, who's never learned to talk yet any but the most utter bazaar Hindustani! He's never in the bungalow five minutes before he begins poring over it now. He often consults his bearer, who's a hill chap, about some phrase or idiom in the stuff. How, how can we expect the natives to respect us if we conduct ourselves in such a fashion!"

Snelgrove was not unmoved.

"Does he admit his bazaari proclivities?"

"Not a bit! He used to be a sort of ingenuous blue-eyed youth, with a large, undiplomatic, cheery sort of mouth, and curly yellow hair of the frankest description. He's as close as wax nowadays, and seems to have got an answer ready for any question one can let loose on him."

"Don't answer extempore, eh?"

"And he never mentions where he's going, or where he's been, or who he has met. If that was all I'd be sorry; for he really was a nice lad, and he don't seem likely to be a nice one long. But that's not all. Rummy things have taken to happening in our bungalow."

At this period the road lost itself in a model marsh about half an acre scale to the mile; when we had found it again, I once more took up my parable:

"Until four or five nights ago there was a moon; well, on Monday night, as you may remember, Sir Benjamin went off directly after mess, and muttered something about having promised to look in at the Judge's after dinner. I happened to do so myself half an hour later; but he had not got there. They said they had asked him; but he didn't turn up. About eleven I strolled home and found our bungalow empty. He had not been there either; but then a rummy thing took place. I was standing in our verandah, and, as it happened, was looking out over the bit of maidan towards the Towli road; the moon was pretty bright, and who should come walking across the open but our friend the Baronet: but not alone! Close beside him was a figure I've grown too familiar with of late—Kalbadévi Rao, the priest. Don't you know him? Oh, he's a sort of chaplain-in-ordinary to Rajah Singh. A Brahmin of the worst sort—half-Anglicised, yet hating us like poison, young, as sharp as a needle, insinuating—yes, and very good-looking. Well, he was walking home with my stable-companion, if you please, between eleven and twelve at night. When they got to the other side of the cactus-hedge, Mr. Kalbadévi slipped behind. I saw him lay his lean fingers on each side of Brodie's face for about a dozen seconds, then he gave a low laugh, and disappeared. Me, of course, he could not see, for I was in the shadow of the verandah, and the bungalow looked empty with no light in it. They had been quite silent before, and had walked rather quick and straight on. The

instant that young villain took his hands off Brodie's face, the Baronet gave a weird howl like a dog does sometimes in its sleep."

"Always kick my dog when he does it!"

"Well; and then he reeled forward—as drunk as a fool! He came stumbling through the gap in the cactus-hedge, and staggered across our compound with his long legs going all ways. And he seemed horribly bad, too. Finally he sprawled over altogether, and I had to go and get him up. He's not much smaller than I am, and it was none so easy to get him in, but I did get him in, and there he lay on a long chair in the middle of the bungalow, his long legs flickering about, his face like tallow, and a clammy sweat all over him. I took his temperature; it was nearly a hundred and four."

"Did he seem ashamed?"

"Deadly. His eyes shifted every way but where they would meet mine; and he seemed to wish me to think him drunk. But if he was drunk, it was from nothing he had taken. It was bedevilment. You may laugh, but it was some unearthly rascality of that Kalbadévi."

I had no sooner got the words out of my mouth than a horrible night-jar flew against it; flew against it with such force that my lips and teeth were driven into each other most unpleasantly.

"Hullo! That's rum, too!" I muttered, putting my hand up to my mouth in some irritation.

We had stood still for a moment, and Snelgrove stooped down; from the ground at my feet he picked something up.

"Good Heaven! It's dead," he said incredulously. "And it was dead long before it hit against your face, Cox."

"Then some one flung it at my face," I observed stupidly, with a peculiar and uncomfortable rising of the skin.

"What a clear way you have of putting things!" he answered, but neither did his voice sound specially complaisant.

In the darkness of a moonless night, on an Indian hill-path, with a jungle-clad mountain rising precipitously on one hand, a very narrow road with an abrupt drop of some hundreds of feet into a pitch-dark nallah on the other, and an invisible eavesdropper flinging carrion at one's face with a very creditable accuracy of aim, certainly the position from the point of view of cheery snugness had capabilities of improvement.

"Nor is that the only rummy circumstance in connection with our bungalow," I began again, when we had walked on for seven or eight minutes in meditative silence.

"Ah, but don't you think, Cox, the rumminess of our own recent circumstances is almost enough for the present? Too much rumminess makes me a little jumpy, thank you."

But as I knew I should go on thinking about it, and it appeared to me more sociable to think aloud, I did not yield to this weakness on his part.

"The other peculiarly rum business was last night. You know I paint, of course?"

"On my honour I never guessed it. With a complexion like yours I should have thought——"

"May I—in your own best interests—may I beg you not to be funny, Snelgrove? Suffice it to say I do paint. Were it not for my devotion to the violin I should probably paint rather uncommonly well."

"Why not try?" suggested my friend, with an unnecessarily earnest desire to encourage in me an exclusive attention to the silent art of painting.

But this insinuation it was beneath me to notice.

"Last night," I continued, "I got back to our bungalow an hour or so earlier than usual, for I had some company accounts to finish, and I went in through my bath-room on the mess side of the bungalow, stopped to put on some slippers in my own room, and then went through Brodie's to the big room where we generally sit. In the middle of it was our friend, painting industriously."

Snelgrove was too ignorant to be sufficiently impressed.

"But he can't paint, you know," I added, "and he was painting by lamp-light—painting a regular picture! I stood still to watch him. Where I was it was quite dark, except for one stream of light that came through the curtain; the light of the lamp fell full on his picture, and I could see he must have been painting for some time, though anything to equal the speed and decision with which he clapped on the colours I never saw. But his face was a good deal more surprising than the picture; his eyes seemed to blaze as if he were on fire, and the flame came out through them——"

"Is your bungalow insured?" enquired Snelgrove, with pitiable frivolity.

"His cheeks were ash-colour, and they're red enough generally; his lips were drawn back as if he were in pain, and his whole air was haggard—indescribably haggard—and wretched-looking. He never looked around for a moment; his eyes moved backwards and forwards from the palette to the canvas, and glanced nowhere else. A very unpleasant feeling of secrecy and stealthiness came over me, and I was just going on into the room when something else attracted my attention, and made me stay where I was. Something was knocked over, and fell on the floor; not by Benjamin, either. Something by the window. Of course my eyes went in that direction, and there, leaning in with his elbow on the sill, was——"

In spite of myself my voice dropped, and, in spite of himself, Snelgrove came closer to my side.

"Not Kalbadévi Rao!" he murmured stealthily.

"Yes; he was watching poor Brodie as a cat does a mouse, and his eyes seemed to feast on that picture. I tell you, Snel, the expression of that young man's face was the most horribly evil thing I ever saw. One has seen some sweet visages at Port Said; but, handsome as he is, his face looked more repulsive than all of them put together. Suddenly there came a diversion to this cat-and-mouse scene; some fellows were coming down the road, and we heard the click of our compound gate as if they were coming in. Before I knew what he was going to do, the Brahmin was in the room by Brodie's side and out again; the picture was gone, the Hindu was gone, and Brodie was standing up with his hands to his head, his teeth chattering, and his forehead wet with perspiration; he reeled about, and one would have sworn he was drunk for a minute or two. However, he staggered to the sofa and lay down, shivering horribly, and for five minutes seemed quite unable to speak."

"Did he speak then? Tell you what he meant by it?"

"Anything but. He was as mysterious as a Cabinet Minister. And he's not at all dark by nature; it makes it all the uncannier."

"Have you any theory about it all?"

"None whatever, except that Kalbadévi Rao is at the bottom of it all. But what his game is I have no sort of idea."

The hill-path comes out on the road close to the bridge, as every one knows who

knows Katàra, and the carriages were all there waiting for us, and the white dresses of the sàises in charge of them showing clearly enough through the darkness.

I had not much time to spare, for I was dining with the Farmer-Copears, and it was already half-past seven. So without wasting many farewells on Snelgrove, whom I should meet again in half an hour, I jumped into my trap and off we went.

To our right was the steep, crowned with the fort, where now a handful of gunners usurp the place of the old Mah-rattì warriors. To our left the ground slopes gently down to the bazaar, and soon we passed the Treasury, and a road leading by some fine old peepul-trees to the "palace."

"Hullo, Lascelles! give us a lift."

Under the deep shadow of one of these ancients stood Brodie; and as he walked into the road, I felt certain that Kalbadévi Rao was standing there still.

Brodie got up, and my mare slipped on again. As she did so, I looked over my shoulder; some one in a white native dress had come out of the shadow and was walking across the maidan towards the palace.

"H'm," I observed austere;ly; but Sir Benjamin took no notice.

We did not talk much. On my part there was a feeling of guiltiness due to consciousness of having discussed him pretty freely behind his back. On his part a half sense of being in disgrace. Nevertheless, I was thinking of him all the time as we slipped along in the darkness.

"Are you dining at the Farmer-Copears'?"

"Yes," he answered, almost to my surprise; he had been so little in evidence, socially, of late.

There were the same food, the same company, and the same topics of conversation as usual at the bungalow beyond the Residency on the Towli road. Mrs. Farmer-Copear was always strong in Europe stores, and lavished tinned provisions with less obvious elation than

might have been expected. Tinned oyster soup, tinned lobster pâtés, then curried Morphe of Asiatic growth and roast mutton of the same, tinned partridge, tinned apricots with whipped-unsweetened-tinned-condensed-milk-cream, tart of tinned cranberries, tinned caviare, and very tinned Europe dessert with hardly a suspicion of plantains, custard apples, or even mangoes. It was a most *recherché* repast. We all knew it by heart, and only broke down a little as to the order.

The company was also "as per usual." The conversation was traditional.

A sacred buffalo had been into Mrs. Farmer-Copear's compound during the picnic this afternoon. Having over-eaten himself he had fallen asleep on the tennis-ground, after devouring five shrubs, four of the doctor's zephyr-vests, and two of her own handkerchiefs; there she had found him on her return, and recounted with great satisfaction how she had beaten him with a broom-handle. Mrs. Flire—they all remembered Mrs. Flire—had suddenly gone home by the P. and O., so had Captain Pegg-Waller, of the P.F.F., on sick leave; he had seemed to grow ill all of a sudden after being at Murree for a month. All sorts of new regulations for the Staff Corps. Duke of Middlesex coming out on tour; no chance, of course, of his coming here; but certainly going to Poona; and so on, and so on. What Anglo-Indian doesn't know that everlasting talk?

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 236.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 8, 1893.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

IF evil thoughts and evil passions could have a tangible effect upon the physical atmosphere, the air of Marston Loring's room, an hour later, should have been thick and heavy. He was sitting thrown back in an easy-chair, his evening coat replaced by a smoking jacket, a glass of whisky and seltzer-water close to his hand. There were also cigars on the table, but he was not smoking. He was staring straight before him into vacancy. His face was pale and set with vindictive passion, to the existence of which in his nature the general callousness of his expression gave no clue.

It was many years since Marston Loring had felt as he felt to-night. It was many years since he had been foiled and thwarted—"made a fool of," as he himself would have said; and all that was blackest and worst in the man was roused by the process. His life, ever since he had realised, at the age of twenty-five, that there were prizes in the world which some men obtained and other men failed to obtain, had been ruled by a series of carefully made and elaborately worked out calculations. Everything he had done, and everything he had not done, had been included in one or other of these calculations; carefully designed to meet certain ends, all of which met and culminated in the one great end of existence as he conceived it—material prosperity and position.

He had been, perhaps, as vicious a youth

as could have been found in London, and he had not ceased to be vicious as a man. But he so managed his vices that even the reputation which clung to him had contributed to his success. The question of marriage he had discussed with himself on more than one occasion, always solely from the point of view of expediency. And just about the time when Mrs. Romayne made her appearance in London society he had come to the conclusion that, given the right sort of woman, the step might possibly prove advantageous. He had been considerably struck by Mrs. Romayne from the first; she was the kind of woman he greatly admired, and he was well aware that to be on terms of intimacy with such a social power was an excellent thing for a man in his position; a position which, as he was also well aware, was by no means so secure as most people supposed. It was from this point of view that he had cultivated Julian, and at first from this point of view only. The idea of Mrs. Romayne as a possible wife occurred to him later. But when it did occur, it developed into active intention with considerable rapidity.

He had looked at the question from every possible point of view, and decided that nothing could suit him better. He admired Mrs. Romayne as much as it was possible to him to admire any one; she was "the kind of woman he could get on with," he told himself. She possessed exceptional advantages in the matter of social standing, and she had money. Her eager cultivation of him during the autumn that followed her first season in town convinced him that with a little trouble she could be brought to forget the disadvantage of his comparative poverty; and he would have proposed to her in the ensuing winter had



not his voyage to the Cape prevented. He had come back with the prospect of a fortune of his own. But the fact made no difference to his matrimonial plans. Where there is money more money is always to be desired. Mrs. Romaine's fortune was no longer absolutely necessary to him, but it had not ceased to be desirable, and her other advantages remained intact. She had received him with enthusiasm, she had cultivated him assiduously; she had absolutely led him on, as it seemed to Loring. He, in common with the rest of the world, regarded her relation with her son as the merest pose, and her appeal for his help with Julian had seemed to him simply the most transparent of subterfuges. He had no more doubted that she would accept him than he had doubted his own existence. And now his plans were frustrated, his calculations were falsified, and his very practical and material castles in the air were laid in the dust. He was refused.

He roused himself at last, and the faintest suggestion of a cruel smile curved his thin lips. He lifted the glass by his side, drank off its contents, and then turned out the lamp and went into the inner room.

His face was quite itself the next morning; the scowl and the cruelty had alike disappeared; and it was with an even less cynical smile than usual that he looked up from his morning paper at a few minutes past ten o'clock, as the door opened with a hasty knock, and Julian Romaine appeared.

"Good morning, dear boy!" said Loring pleasantly.

"Morning, old man!" responded Julian.

He was looking rather pale and anxious in spite of his superficial air of gaiety, and there was a tone of anxiety in his voice as he went on quickly:

"Nothing wrong with 'Welcomes,' I hope?"

Loring smiled again.

"Nothing in the world, as far as I know," he said gaily. "What a nervous fellow you are!"

"What an unreasonable fellow you are!" retorted Julian, the cloud vanishing from his face as if by magic. "What do you mean by dragging a poor wretch down here at this hour in the morning, whether he will or no? What's up?"

It was some legal business, it appeared; and Loring proceeded to go into it with

great circumstance. It sounded very important as he put it, but Julian took his leave, declaring gaily that he "didn't see where the urgency came in."

"You're such an abominably hard-working fellow!" he said lightly.

"Perhaps!" returned Loring. "It's not such a bad principle, and it's an excellent character to have, let me tell you. By-the-bye, Julian," he continued, as the young man turned away with a laugh, and laid his hand on the door, "how would you like to have a few more 'Welcomes'?"

He rose as he spoke, and stood leaning against the mantelpiece with his back to the empty grate, confronting Julian as the young man turned sharply towards him.

"What do you mean?" said Julian. "Are there any in the market?"

"Well, yes," said Loring quietly. "The fact is, there's a certain shooting in Scotland which I have coveted for years. It's for sale now, and on uncommonly reasonable terms. Of course, it's appalling extravagance on my part, for the shares are going up every day. But I am going to sell a thousand pounds' worth of 'Welcomes' to-day and buy that moor."

"It is extravagance!" said Julian, and there was an eager light in his blue eyes.

"Like to have the shares?" said Loring imperturbably.

Julian hesitated.

"I should like them, of course," he said, rather breathlessly. "So would lots of other fellows. But, you see, my thousands, what there were of them, are all locked up in the Welcome already."

"You wouldn't think it worth while to borrow, I suppose?" enquired Loring carelessly.

"There's a little difficulty known as security."

"For some fellows, of course," was the answer. "But not for you. You've got money coming to you."

Julian coloured a dull red, and looked down at the carpet, moving his foot to and fro uneasily.

The idea of raising money on a reversion for such a purpose was for the moment inexpressibly repugnant to him.

"The shares are going up every day," said Loring; "you ought to make a good thing of it; and you'll sell at the end of this week, I take it? However, of course, I don't want to press you. They'll go off fast enough."

Julian lifted his head suddenly, and drove his clenched hand deep down into his pocket.

"I'll do it," he said. "All right, Loring, I'll take them."

"To-day?" said Loring suavely.

"To-day!" returned Julian, almost fiercely.

He turned and left the room abruptly, without another word. And Loring, with the smile of the night before touching his lips once more, took up his paper again. Apparently he had forgotten the letter he had received from South Africa on the previous day, and the news it contained.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

It was six o'clock on the following day, and in the sunset light of the July evening—a light with which the bustling, hurrying, unlovely crowd on which it fell seemed strangely out of harmony—the current of human life was setting strongly in every direction from the City. Along Cornhill, going against the stream, but driven, nevertheless, at a pace which was looked upon far from favourably by the police occupied in regulating the traffic, there came a hansom cab. In the cab, with one hand gripping the doors until the knuckles stood out white, was Julian Romaine. His hat was pulled slightly forward over his brow, as if with some half-conscious sense of the ghastliness of his face, some instinct to hide that ghastliness from casual eyes. His face was of a livid pallor. There were grey shadows about the mouth, which was set into hard lines of temporary and difficult self-control. His nostrils, not sensitive as a rule, quivered slightly as the pace of his horse slackened perforce now and again; he gave no other slightest sign of consciousness of his surroundings.

The cab turned out of Cornhill, and in another second pulled up suddenly. Almost before the cab had stopped, Julian flung open the doors and leapt out. He paid the man double his fare, dashed into the building before which they had stopped, and up the stairs to an office on the second floor. His hand was shaking like a leaf as he stretched it out to try the lock of the door. It yielded to his touch, and he flung it roughly open and passed rapidly in. The outer office had only one occupant, a rather feeble-looking little man, who was trying to improve the appearance of a shabby hat by a careful application of his coat-sleeve. He looked up with a start

on Julian's entrance, and an expression of comprehending concern dawned on his face. He was the messenger of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company. Before he could speak, however, a hoarse, peremptory question broke from Julian:

"Mr. Ramsay's not gone?"

"Not yet, sir," was the answer, given with timid alacrity. "He's here later than usual to-night, you see, in consequence——"

But before the first words were fairly uttered Julian had crossed the room, and as he reached the second door leading into the inner office, it opened quietly, and Ramsay stood on the threshold. He was looking as imperturbable and uninterested as usual, and his voice was dry indifference itself as he observed:

"I have been expecting you all day."

Without a word Julian strode past him into the manager's room, and then, as Ramsay shut the door calmly, he said, in a quick, unnatural tone, which also carried with it a curious suggestion that he had not even heard Ramsay's words:

"It's a mistake! It's a mistake! It must be!"

Ramsay's only answer was a slight shrug of the shoulders as his dull eyes rested, apparently with complete indifference, upon Julian's face; and the latter went on, rapidly and unevenly:

"I've only just heard. I've been out of town all day. I've come to hear—to see what can be done."

The last words were hardly audible, as though his mouth was so parched that he could hardly articulate. He lifted his hand as if involuntarily, and pushed back his hat, fixing a pair of fierce, burning eyes upon Ramsay.

"There's nothing to be done, of course," said Ramsay drily. "The thing's collapsed."

A harsh, wild laugh rang through the room, its faint echoes startling the little man in the outer office.

"Collapsed!" cried Julian. "Collapsed, by Heaven!"

He put out one hand gropingly, caught at a chair near him and dropped heavily into it, letting his face fall forward upon his folded arms as they rested upon its back.

Only half an hour had passed since he had gone to his rooms in the Temple after a picnic on the river, to find waiting for him there a telegram from Ramsay. And into that half-hour had been compressed

such a desperate stand against despair as is little less terrible than despair itself. The telegram had told him that on the opening of the Stock Exchange that morning it had been spread abroad on unimpeachable authority that the Welcome Diamond Mine was under water. This evening, the inevitable sequel of such a fact, as he knew too well, shares in the Welcome Diamond Mine Company were so much waste-paper.

Ramsay stood for a moment looking at him, with a rather curious expression on his inexpressive face.

"It's a turn of the game," he said drily. "If you stand to win, you must stand to lose, too. You hadn't thought of that, I suppose?"

With a sudden tumultuous movement, as though his agony of mind was no longer to be endured in stillness, Julian sprang from his chair and began to walk up and down the room with hasty, uneven strides.

"Thought of it!" he cried. "What was there to make one think of it? It was a certainty yesterday, man; a certainty!"

A spasm passed across his face, and seemed to cut off his words, and Ramsay observed sententially:

"It's a mistake to reckon anything as a certainty till you hold it in your hand."

Julian faced round suddenly and confronted him, his eyes blazing, every feature working.

"What the devil is the good of saying things like that?" he demanded. "Can't you understand that I have reckoned on it, as you call it? Can't you understand that it was all or nothing with me, and I am just done? Can't you understand——?"

He broke off suddenly, and, turning away with a heavy groan, flung himself into a chair, and let his face fall forward on the table. For all that he was face to face with at that moment he could have found no words. The remorse, the sense of failure and helplessness, the despair which seemed to be tearing his heart to pieces, were one intolerable anguish.

Ramsay followed him with his eyes, and then crossed the room quietly, and stood beside his bowed figure, which was shaken now and again from head to foot.

"Is it so bad as this, boy?" he said quietly. Then, as there came no answer, he went on meditatively: "Ten thou-

sand pounds! Ten thousand isn't so much to lose. Counters in the game, that's all."

He paused, and after a moment Julian lifted his face, haggard and drawn.

"It's the stake you must look to," he said. "My stake was heavy, Ramsay. Oh, you're right enough. Ten thousand pounds isn't much. I borrowed a thousand yesterday—raised it on a reversion—to get hold of some shares Loring wanted to sell. That wasn't much either, of course."

He had spoken in a dreary, monotonous voice, which was inexpressibly hopeless. And Ramsay's eyes were fixed keenly on him as their owner said drily:

"You bought a thousand pounds' worth of Loring's shares yesterday? Did you know that he was selling out all his interest in the Welcome?"

Julian turned with a quick, startled movement, and then paused.

"All his interest?" he repeated. "He wanted a thousand to pay for a Scotch moor, that was all."

"He sold every share he had yesterday," returned Ramsay. "Curious coincidence."

"You don't mean to tell me——"

The eyes of the two men met; and Julian sprang to his feet with a fierce imprecation.

"He knew it!" he cried; "he knew it, and kept it dark, that he might keep the market to himself! It isn't possible, Ramsay; it isn't possible!"

"Nothing is impossible," returned Ramsay quietly.

A savage, hissing breath came from between Julian's set teeth, and he seemed literally alive with passion. Without a word, he stretched out his hand for his hat and turned to leave the room. Ramsay quietly intercepted his passage.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"I'm going to see Mr. Loring."

The slightest possible smile touched the elder man's lips, as he said:

"All right. I shall have something to say to Mr. Loring, too. But listen to me first. Was it a desperate necessity to you to pull off this affair?"

Julian did not speak. His lips twitched for a moment, then settled into a thin line; and the look in his eyes was answer enough.

"Very good, then," said Ramsay. "Come and see me at my rooms—not here—tomorrow at six. I may be able to give you a hand."

With a gesture of uncomprehending assent, but with no word of answer, Julian turned away and left the room.

Three-quarters of an hour later he was coming rapidly down the staircase which led from Loring's chambers. His face was flushed and quivering, and every pulse was beating madly, like the pulses of a man who has just given unrestrained expression to furious passion. He turned on to the Embankment, and began to walk away in a headlong fashion, evidently neither knowing nor caring where he was going.

And as he walked the tumultuous life and glow of his face died slowly out, and settled into a haggard, sullen mask of dull despair. He had spoken his mind to Loring, and now there was nothing more for him to do.

### CHARITY.

THERE was a man who had large flocks and herds, and much gold and silver, and notes and bonds, and railways and newspapers, and ships and houses, and all the things which the heart of a man shall desire. He had all these things, as it were, in the hollow of his hands. And he gave away large sums to the Russian Jews, and to Hospitals, and Asylums, and Institutions, and all manner of Societies which are willing to expend the money which they can obtain from moneyed folks; but that was not charity.

And there was a woman, whose husband was a signalman in receipt of the munificent wage of five-and-twenty shillings a week, and she had six children, and her next-door neighbour was a widow, and the widow's children numbered five, and she took in washing, and she fell sick. For five weeks she lay in bed. All the time she lay in bed the signalman's wife did her own work, and, when she had done her own work, she did the widow's washing; and that was charity.

For, as has been said in words which ring down the ages, the rich man gave of his superfluity, and the poor woman gave all that she had.

England is famous for her "charities." She has been a pioneer among the nations in making of "charity" a trade, and a good trade, too. We are all of us acquainted with the typical "secretary" of a famous "charity." An excellent man of

business he is, and very well dressed. His manners are so suave, and yet so firm. Not impossibly he is in receipt of a salary and "commission." That means that out of every pound which he receives for the poor, he there and then deducts a couple of shillings for himself. He tells you, with tears not only in his eyes, but also in his voice, of the sufferings of the starving millions. He does this well, with the persistency of a bagman. Competition is strong. He is aware that if he does not do his best some more pushing tradesman will out him out.

Have you noticed how well-housed are most of our famous charities? The headquarters of the Society for Providing Tenement Prisons for Working Men Up Fifteen Flights of Stairs, are magnificent. The rooms in them are splendid. The entire building is warmed by hot air; it is lighted by electricity. The sanitary arrangements are perfect. There is a lift to every floor. The secretary's room is a model of comfort and good taste; so are the rooms of all the principal officers. Then there is the Society for the Promulgation of Nineteenth-Century Christianity. What headquarters they have! They say that the committee of the Society paid fifty thousand pounds for the ground on which the building stands. And what a building it is! It is admittedly one of Plumbit's finest efforts, and he is something like an architect, is Plumbit. Plumbit was given carte blanche. No expense was spared. You will not find a finer or a more expensive building in the whole of town.

Of course, it pays for a great charity to have magnificent headquarters, or they would not have them; of that we may be quite sure. There are no better managed businesses in the world than our great charities. Their managers know perfectly well that the people who support them are the sort of people who would have nothing to do with anything paltry. Big shops are crushing out the little ones. If a charity is to pay its promoters, it has to be big; little charities scarcely provide their officials with shoe-leather. It is only when they begin to deal with hundreds of thousands of pounds a year that the officials really flourish. To get those hundreds of thousands of pounds it is well understood that there is only one way.

Our modern charities must advertise. That is not only their royal road, it is their only road, to fortune. Columns in the newspapers are advisable. Litho-

graphed letters, sent through the post by the million, are not to be despised. But these methods are old-fashioned. A charitable institution, up to date in the matter of advertising, leaves Barnum at the post. Consider the methods of some of our orphanages. Their managers take the Albert Hall, or, at any rate, the biggest building they can find, and they trot their orphans out for exhibition. They charge for admission—opera prices. They make a collection at the door as you go in, and a second collection, in a specially arranged interval, about the middle of the show. When the orphans are not exhibiting at a big hall in town they are perambulating the provinces. They visit all the towns and villages in England, and in each of them they give a show. In the matter of travelling, compared with the inmates of some of our orphan asylums and children's homes, a travelling circus stays at home. What good this sort of thing does to the youngsters is a question into which we must not too closely enquire. It is possibly one which no one considers. But one thing may be noted. The people who patronise these gruesome exhibitions of juvenile misery and infant prodigies are the very persons who most strenuously object to similar exhibitions on the stage. You require magisterial permission before a child is allowed to earn its own living in the theatre; but no such permission is required, or asked, by the enterprising and charitable individuals who take crowds of children about from town to town in order that, by the public exhibitions of their talents, they—the enterprising and charitable individuals—may gain not only a decent but an excellent livelihood.

There is one method of advertising which is adopted by the managers of some of our charitable institutions, which to the ordinary lay mind is simply astonishing. There are orphanages which—it has been announced from the house-tops over and over again—are run by means of (the word in this connection is designedly placed between inverted commas) "prayer." Every morning the manager "prays" that the wherewithal may be forthcoming with which to keep the establishment going during the next four-and-twenty hours. In the case of an establishment which was not connected with charity, such a mode of procedure would be regarded by the most "religious" person with more than doubtful eyes. A man has no more right to expect to keep

himself and five hundred children simply by means of "prayer" than I have to expect, by similar means, to keep myself and my family. But the strangeness of the thing does not consist in the obvious unreasonableness of such an expectation, whether on the part of the manager of a charitable institution or of a private individual. As a matter of fact, the expounder of the beatification of modern charity has no such expectation. His morning "prayer" is his method of advertisement. He advertises that he "prays." He takes care that the story of his "prayer" finds its way into religious publications the wide world over. By means of it, he appeals to the imagination of the religious public. That it is an effective appeal experience proves. Mrs. Smith reads in her favourite Sunday magazine how Mr. Bounder rises every morning with the sun without knowing where to lay his hands upon a penny, or upon a loaf of bread, and appeals to Heaven to keep himself and the five hundred children whom he has gathered from here, there, and everywhere from starvation for still another day. Mrs. Smith thinks how dreadful it would be if Mr. Bounder's prayer should one day miscarry, so lest such a contingency should immediately arise, she forwards Mr. Bounder a five-pound note. Mrs. Brown, reading the same periodical, is touched by Mr. Bounder's faith, and to show that she appreciates it, the same post which brings Mrs. Smith's contribution brings one from her. Jones, of Jones's Emporium, another reader, thinks it rather a queer start, and wonders what would happen if he tried similar methods to obtain the wherewithal with which to provide for the fifteen or twenty assistants—some of them orphans, and of tender years—whom he employs. He admires Bounder's pluck—perhaps has a sneaking admiration for his advertising method, so his mite goes too. The consequence is, that Mr. Bounder in his reports is able to announce, and does announce, what wonders he has worked by means of "prayer."

No. Charity has nothing to do with advertisement. It does not let the left hand know what the right has done. Nor is charity posthumous. The people who, in their wills, leave money to charities, are not charitable. Very often they only do it to spite their relatives, and their friends, and their acquaintance—which is not charitable. In any case they

only give because they can no longer keep.

Charity abounds, if we may believe the advertisements, and the reports, and the prospectuses. But, although there is probably much more charity than justice, there is very little charity after all. Charity, in the modern acceptation of the term, is not seldom a synonym for injustice. Of the pound we unjustly take we return twopence out of charity. It is becoming a moot question if a millionaire can be honest. There are millionaires who are notoriously dishonest, and whose benefactions are almost in proportion to their dishonesty. The people on whom we bestow what we call our charity, are frequently the victims of—although, in this case, we are loth to call a spade a spade—our injustice. If there were no injustice, it is, at least, doubtful if there would be any need for charity. But the idea of our common responsibility for our common misfortunes is one which is only just beginning to dawn upon the world. Some day, possibly, the advance of civilisation will enable us to grasp it fully. On that day charity in the sense of almsgiving will not only not be required, it will be an absurdity.

If we can only get a good grasp of the idea that charity is sometimes, and, indeed, commonly, but a synonym for injustice, we have not impossibly advanced at least one step towards perfection. To be unjust to no man, that is not colloquial, but it is ideal charity. To suppose that an unjust man can be a charitable man is a supposition born of ignorance. The man who informs you that his are the only goods worth having, and that Tom, Dick, and Harry's goods are good for nothing, and who so forces the information down your throat that he succeeds in crushing Tom, Dick, and Harry out of existence, may be a good man of business, but, though he gives thousands away every year, he surely can have no dealings with charity. It is only because he has succeeded in grasping Tom, Dick, and Harry's share that he is able to make a boast of returning, say, even ten per cent. of each pound. It seems obvious that an age of competition can scarcely be an age of charity.

There is a book which used to be very popular—I believe it still sells—called "The Successful Merchant." It is the life-story of a Mr. Samuel Budgett. It is written by a minister, from a religious point of view, and is intended for religious

folk. It even purports to inculcate practical religion. This Mr. Budgett was a wholesale provision merchant. He is declared to have been the essence of all true charity. He is held up for us to admire, as being the type of a true Christian, and an example worthy of general imitation. The book would not be worth mentioning were it not that it is a striking illustration of an almost universal fallacy.

Mr. Budgett was a sharp tradesman. He had a keen eye for a bargain. His rule was to buy in the cheapest market and to sell in the dearest. He would put pressure on a man whom he knew to be already suffering from the pressure of adverse circumstances to compel him to sell goods at an actual loss. By such means he made a fortune—as by such means men are making fortunes every hour of every day. His biographer tells us that with the fortune which he made by such means, Mr. Budgett was generous. Without touching on the religious side of the question, the secular side of it compels us to ask if a man who has made his fortune by such means can be generous? A usurer makes his fortune in exactly the same manner in which Mr. Budgett made his—there are his biographer's words to testify. He takes advantage of the pressure of adverse circumstances upon those with whom he deals. There are usurers, plenty of them, who have made their fortunes by, literally, ruining others. Can such men be generous? Is it not too late? If a man steals a thousand pounds and gives it all back, the fact of the restitution does not do away with the fact that he has been dishonest. And what shall we say when it comes to be a question of the restitution of ten or twenty per cent., and that not to his victim, but to somebody else entirely? Again, it seems plain that if a man by unjust methods becomes the possessor of a thousand pounds, and by means of that thousand pounds gains a fortune, when it comes to be a question of restitution he must restore, not only the thousand pounds, but with it all that it brought as well. This is a lofty standard, no doubt. But Mr. Budgett is held up, and men of Mr. Budgett's kidney are continually being held up, as illustrations of a lofty standard. Yet, so far as the record shows, to his original victims Mr. Budgett returned absolutely nothing at all, not to speak of all that he had taken. In any correct sense of the word can, therefore, such a man be said to be generous?

It comes to this, that, as the Great

Teacher had it, we cannot in this matter serve two masters. We cannot be uncharitable and charitable both, as it were, in the same breath. If we knock down Tom, it is no palliation of the act to be able to say that we picked up John. Let us first of all refrain from assaulting Tom. It may be said that the struggle for life is so keen that our only hope for existence consists in our having the power and the will to ill-use Tom. There are people who inform you that life is a battle, that each man has to fight for his own hand against the world. The people who preach this doctrine—and, alas! they are as the sands of the sea for multitude—are not only under a delusion, but they cannot have even the faintest acquaintance with, or knowledge of, charity; no, not though they found a fresh orphanage, or a fresh hospital, every day of their lives.

It is this doctrine, which, unlike many doctrines, is constantly being translated into practice, which is the cause of much of the misery which the world has seen, and which it still will see. Only let us clear the air, and sufficiently realise the plain truth that one man has as much right to life as another man; that, if we have any rights at all, life is a right which is common to all of us; and the suicidal notion that, in the sense in which the phrase is ordinarily used, life is a battle, will be classified among the insanities that were. Only let us have justice, elementary justice, and the fallacy of such a theory will instantly appear. Only let us begin to understand that the man who injures his fellow injures himself, and the instinct of self-preservation will instantly assert itself; and he who teaches us that life is a battle, and acts upon his teaching, will soon be regarded as what he is, our common foe. Thank goodness, signs are not wanting that that understanding is beginning to percolate through all the countries of the world. Even those in so-called high places are realising that their own safety may depend, and, indeed, does depend, not only on the fact that it is better to be just before they are generous, but on the plain truth that it is puerile to even talk of generosity where there is no justice.

But we have not attained Utopia; we, surely, have scarcely even begun to move that way. Under present imperfect conditions, is there no such thing as charity? Some of us are in positions for which

we ourselves are not responsible. Can we not show charity, even that charity which consists in almsgiving, and which yet shall be charity, real and true? Certainly. Only, when we begin to contemplate that sort of charity we immediately find ourselves between Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, we are told that if we dispense our own alms we are apt to pauperise. On the other hand, it is certain that if we give our money to—we will state the figure with, probably, undue moderation—say, seventy-five per cent. of what are known as the great public charities, we might as well throw it into the bottom of the sea. One would dearly like to know which of these monstrous modern illustrations of the trade of charity do good; and to whom. That they do good, of a kind, to their innumerable officials is, no doubt, true. What these individuals would do without them one fears to think. They cannot dig—if they could it is difficult to believe that they would be where they are—and though it is certain that to beg they are not ashamed, if what is often but a thin veil of disguise were thrown aside, and they were compelled to confess that they were simply begging for themselves, and that the soliciting of alms was the trade by which they lived—they themselves, first of all, whoever else came afterwards—they would soon find themselves, with the other professional “askers,” within the meshes of the law. But, besides their officials, to whom also do these wonderful “whole-sale” charities do good? One wonders!

There lies in front of me a list of “public charities” which, from every point of view, is nothing else than bewildering. The religious charities predominate. In such a religious country as this is, that is a matter of course. To begin with, each sect appears to have its own particular “charity” for the conversion of all the other sects, or, at any rate, of some of them. The mere idea of such a thing suggests astounding possibilities. Next in point of number are the “medical charities.” One is reluctant to breathe a word against any of them, though tales are told. And it is certain that many a struggling practitioner has forced himself into notoriety by founding a hospital. Any doctor will tell you that that is one of the tricks of the trade. Orphanages under various titles abound. One cannot but fear that the persons who receive the least benefit from the average orphanage

are the orphans. Then there are charities for special purposes—such, for instance, as the charities for the benefit of the deaf and dumb. Enquire into these carefully. For a time almost live upon the premises. Not improbably you will find that some of them deserve support. In this connection make it a rule never to give money to a charity on the strength of its mere "report." You will not know what you are giving to if you do. Give nothing to a charity unless you know it almost as well as you know the workings of your own household.

We need not go through the list. Some of the charities which figure on it as charities, seem, on the face of things, to be unworthy the support of those whose sole desire it is to dispense true charity. Foremost among these are the numerous subsidised trading societies which profess to publish, and to sell, "pure literature." That sort of thing is, on the face of it, a trade. More. The managers of these "charities" are among the keenest and most "cutting" tradesmen going. Then there is the question—and it is not such a simple question as it seems—what "pure literature" really is. Many of these "pure literature" societies produce cartloads of trash, to which no respectable publisher, in the ordinary way of business, would deign to put his name.

At the same time, there are charities upon the list, which, also on the face of things, do promise well. Especially, for instance, those which profess to give aid to discharged prisoners. Few men and women are more in need of charity—true charity, the charity which is synonymous with justice—than they. If you really do desire to become acquainted, practically acquainted, with charity, you can scarcely do better than to turn your thoughts, and to devote your energies and your cash, to the mournful processions which, day after day, issue from the gates of our many prisons.

Charity is "twice blessed." Portia stated truly that it blesses him that gives and him that takes. But it must be the real article, bear in mind, not the Brummagem imitation which is apt to receive such wide advertisement. Have you poor relations? Show your charity towards them. Give them the lift which would be a godsend. Search your street, or your village, or your town—do it quietly, without any sort of ostentation. Don't go too far abroad, don't go to the Fiji Islands, or to the hills and plains of Mesopotamia. So far as you are able, dispense your own

charity. Do your own almsgiving—as much as possible "under the rose." Middlemen are not always to be encouraged, whether they are in the trade of charity or out of it. In spite of all that the advertising fraternity may tell you to the contrary, it is much better that you should give your sovereign to Lazarus direct, than that you should give to an army of well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed officials, to sweat their salary and commission out of it by the way.

## QUITE INEXPLICABLE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

### CHAPTER I.

CERTAIN girls of the good town of Lanford, who had all been to the same school together, grew so fond of it, and of one another, that when the time came for a number of them—all contemporaries—to leave, they could not bear to contemplate the idea of separation, nor the possibility of allowing their highly educated minds to run to seed. They therefore formed a society—"The Belmont Association"—to which all past members of the said school could belong, and which, to quote from the rules, had for one of its objects "the improvement of its members by the reading of essays and discussions thereon, by the encouragement of private study, and the circulation of high-class literature."

This estimable society proved a great success after it was known that the Misses Blackstone—recognised leaders of the "haut ton"—were to be on the committee; and when it had been unanimously decided, and thereafter notified, that tea should be served at all meetings, wheresoever and whensoever assembled, a great accession to its strength took place. The meetings were held at the homes of the members in rotation, and during six months of the year congregations entirely feminine assembled on the first Thursday in every month at three p.m., and considered such subjects as "The Choice of a Profession for Women," "Ancient British Landmarks," "Prehistoric Art in Kamskatka," and other matters of a kindred nature and interest.

On the particular Thursday afternoon when this narrative begins, Miss Helen Kingeland had been reading a paper on the "Enfranchisement of Women," and at the close of the meeting the essayist was strolling up West Walk with her particular



friend, Miss Warrington, and improving the occasion by the delivery of remarks akin to the subject which had been under discussion.

The two girls were nearly of an age, but Miss Kingsland had slightly the advantage in respect of years, and immensely the advantage, or so she considered, in respect of experience of life. She was just twenty-three, of an intellectual countenance, wore the inevitable "pince-nez," spoke with an almost painful precision, and in a voice refined and re-refined to a height of cultivation which made her the envy of half the "Belmont" ladies. Of a tall figure, she dressed with a studied simplicity, walked with somewhat of an air, and generally carried an abstruse work—Clarendon Press editions preferred—with which she refreshed her mental faculties from time to time.

Her companion, Lucy Warrington, was a more earthly being, somewhat short in stature, and of a dapper build; features nothing like so good as Miss Helen's, but with a pretty round face and brown hair, which some one I knew of thought very charming. This younger lady constantly deplored her lack of intellectual power; was horrified when she discovered that the ancient British landmarks palled upon her, and when she found her mind wandering away from the prehistoric Kamaskatkans to wonder what sort of summer hat she had better get. She admired Miss Helen immensely, and only hoped that one day she might attain unto that exalted view of life which characterised her friend.

As the two walked together it was the elder girl who did most of the talking.

"It seems to me, Lucy," she said, in her clear, sharp voice, pursuing the subject of her afternoon's essay, "that to regard marriage as the ultimate goal is an error—a complete error. That may have satisfied women in the past, but it will not satisfy them now. No, the pursuit of the intellectual life should be all-sufficient; that passion styled devotion possesses merely an evanescent value."

Lucy was not quite sure whether she understood this, but she ventured "Yes," rather doubtfully.

"What is vulgarly known as 'being in love,'" pursued her companion, "represents a state of mind from which I pray the gods to deliver me; and, indeed, the rapid conversation of most of the men I have ever met"—here the nostril became a thought more scornful and the voice, if

possible, a thought more refined—"appears to me a poor exchange for the greatest thoughts which have ever been given to the world," by which Miss Kingsland intended to allude to the cream of the "Best Hundred Books" and her practice of reading them.

"Then shall you never marry?" said Lucy shyly, and half ashamed of the audacity which would penetrate the secrets of the great mind beside her.

"Never," replied her companion firmly. "The only perfect life is one of solitary study, the cultivation of the mind, the intercourse—through books—with the great, all-impossible in the turmoil of a home."

"But homes are nice places," remarked Lucy, and then felt that she had said a weak thing.

"The term 'nice'" (with a touch of acidity) "aptly describes the best of them. But surely life should be something more than 'nice.'"

Poor Lucy was crushed.

"I will speak freely to you," pursued Helen, with an air of generosity as of one bestowing a favour. "I wish to warn you, Lucy."

Miss Warrington blushed in anticipation.

"Your life is too good, too valuable to be wasted—far too valuable a possession to be committed to the care of another."

"But I'm not going to commit it," with great energy.

"My dear, I am rejoiced to hear it. Forgive me if appearances led me to think otherwise. Mr. Frank Newbury——"

"Mr. Newbury is nothing whatever to me," with more energy and a deeper blush.

"My dear child, why will you get so warm? Mr. Newbury has been very attentive; you could not help that. It was only the thought that you might possibly give yourself to one whose mind appears to be—shall I say?—wholly bent on puerilities, that led me to speak."

The ways of the companions divided here, and they came to a stand.

Miss Lucy began to laugh.

"Pray let me assure you," she said, "that monsieur has not the least chance in this quarter; and it is really absurd to talk about him in this way. He is simply a member of the tennis club, that is all; and if he will carry my racquet up in the evening how can I help it?"

Helen smiled tolerantly; then, feeling

that the conversation had sunk in level, she strove, before saying good-bye, to elevate it once more.

"Your own most precious possession," she said, "is yourself. It should never pass into other hands. That is why, to my mind, marriage and the usual preliminary frivolities thereto are intolerable; nor can they be defended from any but an unintellectual standpoint. Good afternoon, dear."

And Miss Kingsland sailed off down Victoria Road, leaving Lucy to pursue her way home with a shake of the head at her own deficiencies; for the summer hat rose again into view, and there was that most perplexing question of ribbon to consider.

#### CHAPTER II.

ALL who knew Mr. Frank Newbury must be aware that that mercurial young gentleman could never keep any of his affairs to himself; but always informed his friends of his good or ill-fortune, and his views on matters affecting himself generally, without the least delay. One of those friends was Mr. George Henley, philosopher, misogynist, and—in his leisure moments—clerk in Lurgan's Bank; and it was no surprise to this gentleman when, as he was leisurely walking home one evening, he was assailed by Mr. Newbury, who rushed up out of breath, in manner following, that is to say:

"Henley, old fellow, I want to have a word with you."

"Proceed, my friend, proceed," quoth the other, in an abstracted manner.

"No, but I really want your advice particularly. It's a most important matter——"

"Of course it's about a woman," groaned Henley. "You've fallen in love again, I suppose?"

"Why, what a genius you are for guessing! That's exactly it."

"I thought so," with another groan and an amused expression of countenance.

"Ah, but this is a very different thing from any previous affair. You may laugh, but it is, I can tell you. The fact is, Henley, I'm awfully hard hit, I am indeed. I'm really in such an awful state of mind I can't work——"

"You don't mean that?" with quiet irony, which passed quite unnoticed.

"I can't sleep o' nights; I'm in an awful state of mind. I shall go clean off my head if this state of things continues."

"Who is she, sir—who is she?" said the other, with an amused toleration of his companion.

"Oh, I thought I'd told you. It's Miss Warrington—Lucy Warrington. You know the Warringtons, don't you? Live down the Murton Road. White house, with a chestnut-tree in front. Awfully nice people!"

"Of course they are, my boy. No, I don't know 'em. Well, what are you going to do?"

"Why, that's just the point, Henley; that's just what I want to ask you. What would you do, Henley? Eh?"

"My dear fellow, don't put me in your place, if you please. I sincerely trust I shall never be in such desperate straits."

"Do you think they are desperate, really?"

"Oh, you don't understand. It's the mere fact of being in love I was alluding to. Well, you know, you must go and ask the lady, mustn't you? Correct thing to do, isn't it? I suppose it's no use trying to dissuade you from such a mistaken course?"

"Quite useless," with great emphasis. "You really think you would, now—go and get it over, eh?"

"Go and get it over by all means. You think you are favourably looked upon in that quarter, do you?"

"I—I think so; but how can you tell? The Warringtons are perfectly polite, you know, and all that, but, of course, that's nothing to go by."

"No, I suppose not. What sort of girl, now, is Miss W.?" pursued Henley with a languid interest.

Mr. Frank's face lit up. "Oh, splendid, splendid! Awfully nice little girl, pretty, you know, and an awfully taking way with her. By Jove! a single glance of her eyes is enough to knock a fellow over. Then there's none of this 'higher education' rot about her that so many of the girls are mad upon nowadays. Hang it all! I don't want to marry a wife who knows more than I do. Some of these learned girls are simply unbearable. There's that Kingsland girl, fearfully intellectual, simply unapproachable. By Jove! I know at the Langleys' I told that awfully good story about Sir John Gawthropp, you know, and his terrier and the burglar, and she sat up as mum as an undertaker, and when I'd done began to talk about something out of 'Plutarch's Lives.' I can't bear a girl who's no sense of humour. No,

confound it, the other one's the girl for my money; that intellectual business ain't in my line."

"My boy, I believe you," said Henley fervently. "Go, and joy be with you."

"You really would, then, eh?"

"Certainly, if you've quite made up your mind. You see, if you lose time, you may be too late. Is there anybody else in the field?"

"There's that wretched little Ashley—you know him—fellow with a pale-faced mug—awfully solemn chap—no end of a bore. He used to hang around a bit, but—confound it all, Henley! I'm not proud—but I think I can cut him out."

"My dear sir, you have money. Don't I know the amount of your little account at Lurgan's? You can have whom you please."

At this point the friends parted with mutual esteem, and Mr. Newbury went on his way until he could find some other ear into which he could pour his confidences. Mr. Henley chuckled all the rest of the way home.

#### CHAPTER. III.

ON the appearance of the summer season, the labours of the Belmont Society were brought to a temporary close; the meetings were adjourned for some six months or so, and the learned associates got on as well as they could without the mental impulse supplied thereby.

The final day of the session was marked by a mild festivity in the shape of "tea and tennis" at the house of one of the members. The society on this particular occasion threw off its exclusiveness, and admitted to the privilege of its intercourse a favoured number of acquaintances. Among those honoured with an invitation was Mr. Frank Newbury, whose large means and other good points made him welcome at many gatherings in Lanford society.

Now, although Mr. Frank had avowed his intention over and over again during the last two months of asking Miss Warrington that momentous question, the answer to which was to either transport him with an angelic bliss, or—as he darkly hinted—drive him to end his days by suicide, still he had never up till this moment been able to pluck up heart of grace in order to learn his fate. When, however, the young gentleman had duly accepted the Belmont Society's "kind invitation for the —th," he thought he could

not do better—particularly as he always looked his best in flannels—than screw his courage to the sticking-place and make his declaration to Miss Warrington without any further delay.

Whatever favourable anticipations he may have had, I am not prepared to say; perhaps he augured too well from Miss Lucy's sweetness of disposition and invariable kindness of manner. However that may be, certain it is that he received a very disagreeable shock indeed when, on the particular day in question, the young lady, in reply to his enquiry, gave him, with all due consideration for his feelings but still with great firmness, to understand that his case was hopeless, and that in that particular quarter he had no chance whatever.

I picture the surprise and discomfiture of poor Newbury. He rushed in to Henley that evening in a dreadful state, swore that life was no longer worth living, that he was a miserable wretch for whom the world, with any delights it might afford, was practically ended, and wound up, after half an hour's outburst, by—as usual—asking Mr. Henley for his advice.

"I don't suppose for a moment that you'll take it," said the elder man drily; "but if I were you, I should go away."

Newbury groaned.

"And never have the chance of seeing her, do you mean?" he ejaculated dolefully.

"Exactly, my boy; that's just the point. As you can't have her, what's the use of hanging round miserably? No, go away and forget it all; you'll be able to do that in—let me see—I should say, in three weeks."

"Forget her! Never!" cried Frank indignantly. "I don't believe you've got a heart inside your waistcoat, Henley, confound me if I do. You've no conception of what I'm suffering."

"Oh, yes, I have," replied the other, with great gravity; "that's just why I'm advising you to go away for a bit; it's the only cure. Go down to the sea coast somewhere; I only wish I could. You'll come back in a month—a few weeks—as right as ever you were, see if you don't." Here the front-door bell rang, and Mr. Henley hailed the interruption with a manifest appearance of relief. "There, there's old Butler with his churchwarden's accounts for me to audit, worse luck! Go along, my boy; sorry for you—very, but you'll get over it. I've been through it myself; I know all about it. Good night.

—Ah, Mr. Butler, punctual as ever. How have the collections turned out this quarter?"

The conversation took a very sober turn indeed.

Next morning Mr. Henley received a scribbled line from his friend:

"DEAR HENLEY (it ran),—Think I shall take your advice and go off for a bit, though it will do no good, I know. Don't know where I shall go. Somewhere down south, perhaps.—Yours, F. N."

The recipient of this note turned it over with a queer face.

"Poor beggar!" he soliloquised. "Hope he doesn't suffer much. Hope the girl didn't lead him on. Should like to see this Warrington girl."

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE "Warrington girl," when she had done the only thing possible, and kindly but firmly sent Mr. Newbury away hopeless, was, I need hardly say, greatly in need of some friendly ear to receive her confidences on the subject. Not that Miss Lucy had any notion of boasting that she had taken a scalp—and have not some fair ones been known to brag on this subject?—but she was of a nature and a turn of mind that found it difficult to keep news of any sort to herself.

Unfortunately, Miss Kingeland—that confidante-in-chief—was away from home, having deprived the Belmont Society of her presence and support for some month or more. She was staying with her mother—a benevolent old lady, with no pretension to learning, and whom the daughter patronised with an insufferable graciousness—at a remote Cornish seaport. To recruit her health and seek "refreshment by a communion with Nature in her wilder moods"—see Miss K.'s own letter—was her avowed object in this isolation at such an early period of the season. Having started with the declaration that she could stay at Tregarven for ever, enjoying "in perpetuo" the delights of that primitive fishing village, Miss Kingeland appeared to have veered round considerably in course of time, as may be seen by the following letter. This epistle Miss Lucy, on returning from the Belmont affair and big with her secret, found awaiting her on the hall table.

"MY DEAR LUCY," wrote the estimable

Miss K. in her clear, upright handwriting—"I accept your condolences on the state of the weather; it rains continuously, and has done so for several days. Under these circumstances Tregarven is far from a cheering abode. When I tell you that we have developed an incurably smoky chimney, and that for the past week the weather has been too rough—the wind altogether too violent—to venture out of doors, you will understand the value I put upon the possession of a philosophic mind which can contemplate any and every change of life with equanimity. I deplore, however, the complete absence of human interest; we are the only visitors in the place, and although, far too frequently, human intercourse is disappointing in the extreme—as in the attempt to associate with those possessing minds of an inferior calibre—yet the complete absence of all opportunity even for such experiment is to be deplored. I cannot but feel, however, more and more that an intellectual life—such as I think I may say is mine—must ever be to a great extent a lonely life. I think of an ill-assorted union—such as I have seen—with feelings of horror. To keep my mind braced by study and free from the weaknesses which, alas! beset so many will always be my endeavour. May I hope, my dear Lucy, that even in a less degree that may be yours also."

Miss Kingeland concluded her letter with a Greek sentence which I regret to confess that I am unable to write down correctly, and begged to remain, etc. etc.

Lucy read this effusion, folded it up with a half-sigh and a smile, and then, her mind reverting to her own affairs with extraordinary rapidity, ran upstairs to confide in the best of mothers.

When people are away at the seaside the number and length of the letters they write are usually in inverse ratio to the extent of their enjoyment; and when, therefore, several weeks went by without further communication from Miss Kingeland, Lucy judged that her friend was enjoying good weather—of every description—and found life at Tregarven decidedly worth living. She was not, however, prepared to hear such an interesting piece of information as was presented to her by Miss Laura Richmond—a School of Art crony—when they met at the corner of Victoria Road one day.

"Now, Lucy," cries Laura, with her

fat, good-natured face all a-grin, "I've got some news for you! Guess who's engaged!"

Of course Lucy can't guess, and, in any case, the other is too impatient to wait.

"No, you'll never guess," she cries, "though it's a great friend of yours. It's Helen—Helen Kingsland."

"Never!" cries Lucy incredulously. "Why, she has declared again and again that she would never marry. She has told me so a dozen times."

"Perhaps no one ever asked her to before," says Laura, with a malicious chuckle. "But now—who to? That's the point."

"Some one she has met at Tregarven, no doubt."

"Yes; but who? Who in the world do you think?"

Miss Laura so convulsed here, her speech is quite indistinct.

"My dear Laura, how can I possibly tell? No one I know, I dare say."

"Oh, don't you, indeed?" cries the other, with immense enjoyment of her news. "Well, it's Frank Newbury."

"O-o-h!" ejaculated Miss Lucy, with such a funny face. Then she added: "I wonder why Helen never wrote to me."

But if Miss Kingsland did not write, Mr. Newbury did. He sent the following letter to his friend Henley. That gentleman showed it some time afterwards to Miss Lucy herself; from which fact I imagine that the two last named not only became acquainted, but also that they—but this is going into a separate story altogether.

This was the letter:

"DEAR HENLEY,—You were right and I was wrong, old fellow. I never did a better stroke of work than when I left Lanford. What good angel brought me to this spot I don't know, but there I found Miss K.—you know who I mean—or should it be whom I mean, eh? I want to improve myself in grammar. You know I used to talk about her, and crack jokes about blue-stockings, and all that. Well, I never made a greater mistake in my life. Now that we're engaged—we are engaged, you know—Helen's going to help me to educate my mind. You know I'm not an intellectual cuss, am I? But I'm going to work hard.

"I've been reading some of Browning's poems which Helen has lent me. Did you

ever read 'em, and can you make 'em out? I can't. When I come back I'll call in and get you to explain some of the things to me. What a confounded ass I've been to let my mind run to seed! I simply don't know how I had the cheek to ask Helen to have me; she's all intellect, you know, and all that. There's a very good billiard-table here at the 'Crown,' where I'm staying. You see the Browning comes rather stiff, and I have to relax a bit now and then. At the same time I do wish I was a cleverer fellow.

"Can you tell me what this Greek means on enclosed slip?—it is Greek, I believe—is that spelt right, or is it ie? I never can remember. Helen wrote it and slipped it inside one of the books she lent me, and asked me if it wasn't fine. 'Oh, uncommon!' says I gravely; but, confound me, Henley, if I know what it means! Do tell me, there's a good fellow.

"Yours ever, F. N.

"P.S.—Helen's the dearest girl."

## SEASIDE EXISTENCE.

I USE the word "existence" advisedly, as distinct from the more vivacious word "life." The latter, properly speaking, belongs only to the short spell of two or three months when the season is on. Between the two there is nearly as much difference as between light and dark. There is certainly as much difference as between a man drunk and a man sober.

Those happy mortals who behold the sea when it is on its best behaviour, and none other, are, I think, to be congratulated. They store some sweet impressions of it in their minds to take back to the metropolis and the midland towns whence they have come. From that time forward they think of it only as they know it; as a charming, bright, glistening surface of sunlit blue water, agreeably studded—no doubt for the sake of the effect—with white sails and boats gently rocking. It is a convenient locality—at least its environs are—for the children to learn how to use their spades without damaging the home garden. It is also wonderful for its fish. For the rest, it has no bad qualities, none whatever. Its association with the agreeable time of holiday is of course yet another reason why it gets monstrously idealised in their somewhat unreasonable, not to say fatuous, minds.

Little they know it, however. We

others, who spend at least ten or eleven months of the year by its "briny marge," trust the beautiful ocean about as much as we would a wolf fresh from its native forest. Somehow or other, after awhile, we fail to regard it as the charming attraction it ought to be. The monotonous booming of its waves, or their drowsy alipshod scraping on the shingle, gets mortally tedious. It is little better than the tiresome voice of the metropolitan hurdy-gurdy, and inasmuch as you cannot bribe it to take its noise into the next street, and neither prayers nor oburgations can tranquillise it, it seems even worse than the most fiendishly persistent of expatriated Italians. Granted, of course, willingly, that in certain moods it is sufficiently winsome. But we dwellers by it know how little these fair appearances are to be trusted. The annual visitor is not in the secret. He, with his wife and the six or seven little ones, are fain to clap their hands and praise it to the skies. They snuff in its breezes and never weary—in the fortnight—of staring at it with clasped hands and beatified countenances. They say all manner of foolish, fond things about it, and strenuously wish that certain absent dear ones could be with them to share in the felicity it seems to generate within them. It is all in all to them—for the fortnight. They bathe in it, row on it, and eat its shrimps. Even the musical bands and the nigger minstrels that congregate on the Parade are a mysterious part of it, all contributing to the pleasure of the holiday-maker. And so it often happens that a family sheds hot tears under the strain of parting from it when the fortnight has expired.

It is really exceedingly foolish of such people. They know not in earnest truth what they weep for. Of all whited sepulchres, the beautiful sea is about the whitest and the falsest. It has been asked over and over again—by Paul Dombey and the picturesque child that advertises Beecham's Pills—"What are the wild waves saying?" If we could lay hands on a philologist skilled in marine tongues, I warrant we should learn that as a rule the wild waves used very strong language.

Even in their mildest moods I fancy they are only jeering at us mortals; mocking us for paddling bare-legged in them and filching the shells, zoophytes, and other rubbish which they have altogether done with. How can it be supposed, in

any case, that they have aught to say to minister to our own self-importance? What profit are we to them? Indeed, the profit is manifestly all on the other leg. We have no control over them, for the spilling of a pot or two of oil upon a few square yards of their water for our own purposes is not to be taken seriously. They gang their own gait, and doubtless think themselves sufficiently complacent for consenting to bear so many of our vessels to their destinations. But, of course, they often fail even in this respect, just to show how independent they are. Under these circumstances it is too much to expect that we should be edified if we could make head and tail of the language of the wild waves.

We dwellers by the sea have no such diverting time of it for six or seven months in the year. Have you not, it may be asked, boating and fresh fish, and pure, undefiled air? For the matter of that, I suppose we have all three; and preciously weary we get of them. Speaking for myself, there is nothing I so much enjoy in the dead of winter as a journey to town to breathe the dear old fog—the colour of a smoked primrose—which caress the lamp-posts so lovingly in London's streets. This is an atmosphere to be proud of, let the doctors and invalids say what they will. I feel as well again in it as when I have the blustering, impudent, untrammelled sea-breeze blowing in my face, with an air pellucid to the horizon. In a London fog—bless it!—I am perfectly happy, and my imagination begets all manner of pretty fancies. Whereas by the seaside—except in the season—I am nearly always in a state of simmering melancholy. I am not naturalist or psychologist enough to be able to explain why this is so. Between ourselves, I imagine it is due to my abnormal sensibility. I am, don't you see, behind the scenes of the ocean, know all its meannesses and brutality, and am thus never so much on my guard against being ensnared by it as when it seems most seductive. Solomon was right when he said that knowledge increases sorrow.

We had a wreck here one day—or rather, I am sorry to say, one night—last winter. The man who has been present at a single downright thrilling wreck—with the cries of men and the wail of women travelling towards him on the back of the wind—will ever afterwards be suspicious of the sea. It is instant enlightenment for

him. If he chanced to be called out to man the lifeboat—the regular practitioners being almost excusably loth to attend—his feelings will probably be yet keener. That, dear reader, was my fate that day, or rather that night. I was dreaming a very sweet dream when they woke me and asked if it was my pleasure to volunteer in this service of mercy. Now, dissimulation is a fine and essential quality in this life of ours; but there are times when unregenerate human nature revolts against it. I do not mind, therefore, admitting that at the outset I demurred to the task that was asked of me.

It was only for a moment. The bed was so warm, and the wind outside made such an infernal howling. Also, there was snow. No wonder one or two of the regular crew pleaded indisposition, or their wives did for them, which is quite the same thing. Then the nobler part of me prevailed, and I dressed and started into the storm. We got to the boat, manned and launched it, and for a quarter of an hour had a pretty wild time. It was but the toss-up of a penny piece with us whether we should get through the waves or fail to get through them. In the meantime, dear reader, what think you had happened? The craft which had summoned us to her aid had got the better of the tide, with which she believed she was struggling in vain, and was comfortably tacking away from us. After about an hour of very vigorous exercise, we returned to the shore convinced that she had gone down. But the look-out men told us otherwise. Then we went back to our cooled beds, trying to convince ourselves that valour, like virtue, is its own reward.

Now, in the dear old metropolis, with its nice thick fogs—condensed sections of which I have thought of stealing in a portmanteau—no man except the doctor has his night's rest thus mutilated. And the doctor receives fees for his pains, in addition to the sound consciousness that he is a philanthropist.

But the fish, you say! How appetising to have these toothsome esculents sent to your door ere they have done flapping their tails, and with a vain look of appeal in their living eyes! In reply, I beg to say that there is a fallacy here. It is not we dwellers by the seaside who have the pick of this market. We catch it, and you in London eat it. At least that is the conclusion to which I am driven after being told three days running by my

housekeeper that she can discover nothing but kippered herrings in the market of my little town. Such fish as we do get is often of doubtful freshness; so that we are fain to think it has been rejected by Billingsgate, and thence returned to us. However, the world is full of compensations. I gladly confess, therefore, that though the real thing in a state of excellence is hard to obtain, our poultry, by preying upon fish offal, lay eggs with a fishy flavour. We are thankful for this mercy.

Needless to add, moreover, that though fresh fish are not always available for us, we are never deficient in the smell of stale and dead fish. I cannot take my dog for a walk without having to quarrel seriously with him because his depraved appetite leads him to snuffle at, and even attempt to eat, cods' heads and other half-decomposed abominations which adorn our coast. The tastes of cats in this direction are well known. I declare I can smell my cat at a distance of a hundred yards. The dainty creature must be more than half metamorphosed into a fish by this time.

I often get letters from metropolitan correspondents which contain sentences eight or nine lines long in envy of what they call the sweet and healthy peace of my life. Sweet and healthy fiddlesticks! It is thought, too, that the seaside is an admirable locality for brain work and the flow of imagination. I take leave to doubt both suggestions. Schopenhauer fancied noise of any kind was death to the energy of great minds, and said you could judge of the quality of the mind by marking its sensibility or insensibility to outside influences. I dare say he was right. But be that as it may, better far for the brain is the pleasant roll of cab-wheels and the mail-carts from St. Martin's-le-Grand than the treacherous sing-song murmur of the ocean, even on its best behaviour. Cab-wheels are honest things—a deal more so than their drivers. They do not run over poor helpless bipeds unless the bipeds themselves invite them quite irresistibly to do so. The sea, on the other hand, feasts on us by the thousand per annum. For my part, and writing with a flippancy I do not feel, I wish with all my heart it would digest all the poor mortals it swallows. This, however, it declines to do.

I remember one pleasant spring evening I had wandered from my cottage over the downs. There were violets under the hedgerows, and primroses everywhere.

It was a mild, sunny time, and the golden wisps of cloud out over the still waters, with the sweet song of thrushes in a neighbouring copse, were just the influences to make the brain think profitably. Thus wandering, I descended into a granite cove, which most people in my part of the country are content to regard as inaccessible. And here, with her back against a smooth boulder, still glistening with water, and with her feet half hid in a drift of sand, was a drowned woman. Her long hair had been lashed about her by the ruthless waves, and there she lay, with parted lips, facing the sunset, and with the melodious babble of her murderer, the sea, in her dead ears.

This sort of thing is enough to put any feeling person out of humour with the sea, be its mood ever so blue and confiding. It is a shark, always on the watch for victims, though not always in the humour for a meal. Poets who write in praise of it seldom have more than a casual acquaintance with it. They are like the traveller who visits a famous city, stays there just long enough to see its unique attractions, and to shake hands with its most distinguished citizens, and afterwards composes a book, in which he declares that all the buildings of the city are as magnificent as the few he saw, and all the citizens marvels of wisdom, courtesy, and grace. The ancients who wrote of ocean as "the darksome sea," are the true authorities about it. One must go to our novelists, not our poets, for a fair mirror of its qualities. What do they show us? Why, simply that for iniquities and horrors the earth cannot hold a candle to it. The accomplished pirate is still the *ne plus ultra* of human infamy. The beauty of its sunsets and sunrises is but a diabolical foil to the tragedies of which it is the very source and inspiration.

But to return from this larger part of my theme to the little town in which I dwell. It is a red-roofed place, and very indifferently drained. During the five years of my self-exile here I have marked with a kind of awe how grave a change comes over the stranger who consents to acclimatise in the town. I do not attribute this to merely local influences. Theosophy itself, as such, cannot expound the mystery. At length, however, I have come to the conclusion that it is due to the peccant marine atmosphere, and nothing in the world else.

Venice, Tyre and Sidon, Boulogne, Monte Carlo, and many other cities have been ruined by the sea; and it is the same with individuals as with cities. I refer, of course, to morals. If I were writing a book on some high philosophical theme, and needed illustrations of evil-doing, I should find them all to hand in extraordinary abundance in the little town by my side.

Let me particularise, that my general indictment may secure a measure of justification. There is a certain Methodist Chapel in the town which several years back welcomed a pastor of notorious sanctity. His credentials were all they could possibly be. Last year, however, he vanished with the wife of our leading grocer, leaving his own wife behind him. Here is another case. Needing some small assistance about my premises, I engaged from my native inland town a lad of exemplary conduct. He looked uncommonly well in buttons, and for six months did his duty to my satisfaction. Then, to my distress, I convicted him of robbing me. He pleaded guilty, and, with innumerable tears, confessed that he hadn't the faintest idea what impelled him to get at my desk and annex my postage stamps. "It wur a sort o' voice, sir, an' I couldn't help it, indeed I couldn't."

Then, again, is not the seaside lodging-house keeper a proverb for her lack of integrity? She may have been as upright as any of her sex when she migrated to the Parade; but, little by little, the insidious atmosphere corroded her virtue, so that, after a year or two, she is as brazen as the Portland convict just beginning his third five years' term.

Look next at the behaviour of those mariners who let boats on hire and live, as it were, in the very lungs of the ocean. I hope I am not wronging them, but verily I believe their equals for sophistication, craft, and chicanery are not to be found in any inland city. Their blasphemies, too, would make the red-gowned magistrates of old Venice—who vainly issued so many mandates against this form of self-indulgence—gasp with stupefaction if they could but hear them. And yet these men, for the most part, had worthy mothers, and were taught in Sunday schools like the rest of mankind.

I have been struck, too, by the very contemptible tone of thought in my little town. The word "progress" has nothing to do with it. Never were there, I should



think, such a number of idle, gossiping old women in so small a compass. To form an idea of their conversation, take Act One, Scene One, of Sheridan's "School for Scandal" and apply it to them, though their speech lacks the amusing veneer of polish which characterises the talk of Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, and the others. They divide their time between tea, knitting, lies, innuendoes, and divine service somewhat impartially. When the sun shines, you may see them converging towards our little Parade from all parts of the town at a certain hour, and all at a pace like that of an impatient snail. Having united and peered at each other through their veils to see what personal blemishes their friends have developed during the last four-and-twenty hours, they then hie them to certain iron seats, where they sit and taste each other's gossip on their tongues for a time. With them it is a case of "Devil take the fore-most" to depart; for as each member of the coterie shuffles homewards she becomes a prey to the rest.

I do not wish to be uncharitable in my strictures on these ladies, but I must say they have little to recommend them to the rest of the world. Yet they are not likely to die out in a hurry. They have no worries, and they take life more than calmly.

Do they not read? you ask. I believe they do; their Bibles, and such antediluvian literature as the subscription reading-rooms can offer them. But the latter is a terrible collection of books. It contains Hannah More's productions and a number of novels written in the first two decades of the century. Anything of the last forty or fifty years that it possesses has come to it by accident or bequest.

I know nothing more deplorable than this sort of thing. In the name of rectitude, what are present-day writers for if not to be read by present-day readers? As it is, I suppose in my poor benighted little town the works of the Victorian novelists will begin to be asked for towards the middle of the twentieth century. People will not see that novels are quite as necessary to mankind as soup kitchens, Bible classes, and hospitals. For there is a salvation of the body and the reason as well as of the soul. And it is fully as absurd to read old novels as it would be to go into Tottenham Court Road in 1893 dressed like a citizen of the time of Henry the Seventh.

In all these instances is it not evident that it is not the criminals themselves who are to blame, so much as the corrupt air they inhale?

For genuine goodness of heart and conduct command me to the average Londoner, or the dweller in the remotest of midland valleys, where stately heather-clad hills jealously guard the villagers from the contaminating breath of old ocean. It may be demurred—does not the sea air blow up the valley of Thames into the metropolis, and try to defile it? Perhaps it does, but London's atmosphere acts like the shield of an invisible divinity, for ever engaged in protecting earth's greatest city from this sad influence. Even as it is, Heaven knows London is not perfect; but of its wickedness nine-tenths originates in the neighbourhood of the Docks, and the other tenth belongs to those who go down to the deep in big ships or their own yachts. The bulk of London is composed of the stalwart middle class, who have fully as much of the muscle of virtue about them as had Aristides, Cato, and certain other famous ancients whom we regard as types of human integrity.

There is a deep, ingrained error in many minds, by which the sea is spared a particular amount of discredit that is its due. What, pray, is the common opinion of sea-sickness? Is it not viewed as a malady incident to a weak stomach or a weak head? That seems to be the general belief. The beautiful blue sea, with its curling waves, has no intentional part in this microcosm of torture. It is an affair of chance and personal inaptitude, nothing more.

Surely, though, this is not a view of the matter likely to be acceptable to higher intelligences. I will not go so far as to say that the malady is due to the conflict of the astral natures of the more noble among us with the invisible essence of the ocean—a conflict in which poor human beings inevitably go to the wall, or, rather, to the ship's side. But to me it is as sure as anything that sea-sickness is a mark of human excellence in its victim. The sufferer may not have developed his finer faculties. He may even be living a wicked life, with his virtues all overlaid by vices. Yet the virtues are there, latent in him, nevertheless. They need a ripe occasion to bestir them into activity: such an occasion is the sea itself, in a measure. They are piqued into vitality by its prodigious vileness; they struggle more or

less effectually with the intangible spirits of the deep, and at length—alas, for poor human nature!—give up the contest and admit that they are beaten. To my mind there is no moral analyst like the ocean. The man who wishes to prove his friends must take them a yachting trip. Then let him hold in shrewd distrust those of them who pace his deck with head erect and hands in pocket, loudly averring that a life on the ocean wave is the life of all lives for them. It is a lamentable confession of their moral deficiencies. On the contrary, he may confide in those who lie groaning in the “chaises longues,” looking so green and white, and wishing they had never been born.

If, in putative opposition to my theory, you object that there are many mariners of unquestionable nobility of character, I am not to be daunted. Habit and strength of will are factors in their case. The best of such men, you will find, were at the beginning of their marine existence as sea-sick as any landsman. But they have persevered until they are now tolerably at ease on the malignant water, even as a magnanimous soul, after much writhing, makes a compromise with the base clay which enshrines it, and from which at the outset of its career it was wont to recoil so strenuously.

On the other hand, there are many patent examples of the lamentable effect of the sea upon characters which have been surrendered unreservedly to its influence.

Take the Neapolitan boatmen. Have they their equals for diabolical meanness and brutality? Perhaps they have, though I don't know where to find them. Suppose you are a lady in tender health, and yet with an eager desire to visit the fascinating little island of Capri. You see a handsome fellow in a jersey on the quay of Santa Lucia, and learn that he is a ferryman licensed to carry passengers to the steamer, which is already waiting to start for the island. You are poor and prudent, and therefore you fold your hands firmly in front of you, and ask the boatman to say for what sum he will transport you across the fifty yards of waterway. There is a nasty choppy sea on; you hope, however, that the steamer will be bearable. The man says “One franc,” and he calls you “Signorina,” although you are forty-five. This is moderate and nice of him, and so you smile cheerfully, wave your hand, and say “Good!” The honest man also smiles—he has wonderfully white

teeth, all in their proper places—and very methodically he prepares his boat for its journey.

The steamer whistles impatiently for the third time ere he has got you afloat. Being forty-five, and not very strong, you begin to be dreadfully nervous lest you should be left behind. With difficulty you signify your fears to the man, who is certainly very handsome; indeed, you don't know which to admire the most in him, his teeth, his honest dark eyes, his muscular shoulders, or his complexion of golden brown. In response he seems to hurry. He does not carry you straight to the steamer, but towards an open part of the harbour, where the waves of the Bay come tumbling from the base of Vesuvius in a very violent manner. In two minutes you feel qualms. The man watches you, and rejoices that you show signs of internal disturbance. You motion towards the steamer. “Go quickly,” you say.

At these words the man draws in his oars, smiles with superb grace, and crosses his arms.

“I go no farther, signorina,” he says, “unless you give me five francs. I keep you here, going so, so”—he rocks the boat violently, so that you scream, for the gunwale was level with the water—“until you give it me.”

“Five francs!” you exclaim; and then, if you have a fair vocabulary, you storm as violently as your feelings—which are worsening—will allow you to.

It is of no avail. The steamer whistles once more.

“She goes,” cries the boatman; “is it ‘yes’?”

You groan and pay; the honest fellow won't move till he touches the money; and thus you arrive just in the nick of time, ill and despoiled.

The Neapolitan boatman is, as he has been called over and over again, a true child of the sea; and I should think his mother is very proud of him.

In conclusion, I for my part look forward to the time when the oceans shall all be scientifically eliminated. It ought not to be a difficult task. They are clouds in dissolution, are they not? Well, then, why may we not resolve them into clouds? Then, and not till then, shall we be able to make a fair estimate of the rapacity of this beautiful sea upon which the more simple of us take such fond, foolish pride in dandling ourselves.

The man who strives to compare the

charms of a seaside residence with those of metropolitan life avows himself inadequately civilised. Charles Lamb had the best of the argument with Wordsworth on a kindred theme. His praise of London ought to be done in letters of gold, and set in each quarter of the city, where all eyes may see it once or twice a day:

"O, her lamps of a night; her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastrycooks! St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand, Exeter Change, Charing Cross—with the man upon a black horse! These are thy gods, O London . . . all the streets and pavements are pure gold . . . at least, I know an alchymy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds."

I could say much more on this subject, but I fancy this is enough. If any reader thinks me insincere in my indictment, I am open to convince him practically that I am serious. He can have my cottage on a rocky cliff—with a private bathing cove below—for his house in Grosvenor Square on a mutual lease of five, ten, or twenty years.

## ON KALI'S SHOULDER.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By JOHN AYSCOUGH.

### CHAPTER II.

SNELGROVE, the Baronet, and I left together, and, as it happened, we walked home. Outside the bungalow Snelgrove had hung back a minute or so to see Mrs. Second in Command into her demesne, and by the time we had lighted our cheroots, after doing so, the Resident and his sister had joined us. The Residency bungalow being next door, of course they walked too, and we started together. At their compound-gate we said good night, and went on after the Baronet, who had seemed impatient and had not waited. He was a hundred yards or so ahead, and we could just see his black figure against the white road; he was whistling, and East and West seemed met together in the panting silence of the tropic night and the transatlantic cadences of the "Bogie Man."

Suddenly the whistling ceased—stopped dead in the midst of a bar, and at the same time the stalwart figure in its evening

blackness was swallowed up in the broader blackness of a grove of banyan-trees.

If you know Katara you will remember the precise spot—perhaps three hundred yards past the Residency—where the road dips, and to the left there is a well where the Bheesties come and fill their skins. Most of these magnificent banyan-trees are on the left of the road also; but there are enough on the other side of it to make the road here a tunnel of blackness by night.

That we should see Benjamin no more was therefore natural, and there was assuredly no cause for alarm in his stopping that noise, as, perhaps, he had stuck a cheroot in his mouth, and we should presently see him light it. But we did not, and now the shadow swallowed us up also.

To tell the truth, neither of us was giving a thought to the Baronet. The Albatross had worn a new gown, putatively imported, but we didn't believe in it.

"No, my boy, durzi-made in the verandah from a fashion-plate and paper pattern. That wavy seam never came through the Canal."

At that moment we stopped dead, and I pointed under the banyans, to the right, where now a gentle slope led up to an isolated and irrelevant temple, up which slope a white figure flitted silently.

"Kalbadévi Rao, I bet you ten rupees," I whispered; "and Brodie's with him: come and see if he isn't."

The temple was not lighted up for any midnight ritual, and the real priest of it was a very old Brahmin who would be extremely unlikely to come there for fun in the middle of the night. And there was something youthful about that flitting figure.

Under the trees we slipped and over the dry, dewless grass. We flung away our cheroots, and were silent as we went. Close to the temple is a low wall, shaded by trees at either end, and into that shadow we passed with a sneaking sense of stealthiness. Immediately before the temple there is a break or gateway in the wall, the temple itself standing on the brow of the little hill, presenting a blank wall on the three other sides, but pierced in front with pillared doorway and windows.

The temple might be twenty feet square, with a heavy pagoda in rear decorated with carvings, niches, and statues of Hindu deities of great "franchise d'allure."

Very black against the steely indigo of the sky showed the temple, sandstone-red by day, but blacker yet the three gaps of door and windows, until a pale glimmer flickered through them as of the collected, multiplied light of ten thousand fireflies. This weak glimmer strengthened till it grew into a faint and ghostly limelight, though whether it came from lamp or candle we could not tell. It shone from behind the dark blue image of the god Vishnu, whose portentous shadow it flung forward on two figures of flesh and blood; one a youthful, slender form in flowing white, the other taller by the shoulders and upwards, incongruously Western, absurdly modern in its evening black.

They were speaking, but in tones much too low for aught save the faintest murmur to reach us. Presently the light faded out and we waited, expecting that they would come out of the temple and probably separate. But no one came, and we stole out of our ambush and walked up the knoll to the temple.

There was no one in it. It was so small that the light of one match enabled us to see that.

Behind the statue the floor was stained as by some heap of charcoal that had been burned upon it—charcoal steeped in essences unknown to us. A very heavy and peculiar odour pervaded the place, and it was full of smoke that affected the lungs powerfully. It caused no choking sensation or desire to cough, but seemed to stop breathing altogether.

There was no door but that in front of the temple; how had the two come out, with that light behind them, unseen by us? Just outside upon the ground we picked up Brodie's handkerchief—a silk one, that had not been used or unfolded, and which he had probably slipped into his sleeve—as one is apt to do, forgetting one has pockets in mufti—and dropped without knowing.

But Brodie himself had vanished as completely as if the ground had opened and swallowed him. Had it?

"Odd, eh?"

"Very odd."

We turned homeward down the slope of the hill behind the temple.

"What is in it?"

"The devil," I answered, without hesitation.

"If it was only the devil I wouldn't mind; but Kalbadévi Rao is what I can't stand."

Captain Snelgrove had an idea that with all his faults the devil was not a native.

Down the road in silence. At the gate of his compound we paused.

"Good night. Think it over and let's hear your views."

"Better come in and have a peg. I may have them ready by then."

But I wanted to get home.

"No, I've an idea myself. Come on to our bungalow and I'll tell you."

Of course, we had neither of us the least expectation of finding Brodie there. Still, the fact that we did not seemed to accentuate his disappearance more strangely.

"All the mischief came out of this," I said, giving an ill-natured kick to the old elephant-trunk in which the Baronet had been rummaging on the afternoon from which I dated the change in him. "Let's investigate."

To my surprise I found it locked.

"He must have locked it, and why? It's not his; there's nothing of his in it."

We decided to open it, and after trying a dozen little keys found one that unlocked it. Its contents were such as have been already described; but it was obvious they were not in the same condition. The papers had been carefully sorted, and many of the exercise books had what seemed to be rough plans drawn on blank pages and margins of leaves. And many new papers had been added in Brodie's handwriting but in Mahratti character.

"And now what's your idea? And what are you making of that plan?" asked Snelgrove.

"My idea is that this is a plan of the temple we've just seen; they're mostly plans of temples, I expect; but what ones I don't know. Look at that one, though. Have you ever heard that there are secret passages from the temples at Towli to the Fort? And from the Fort to the ruined temples in the hills?"

He admitted he had heard it. "But," he added ingenuously, "as the late Ananias told it me, I have not hitherto fatigued myself with believing it. My medical advisers warn me against over-taxing my constitution; and I have not felt justified in taxing it so far as to believe poor Ananias."

"Well, my theory is that Brodie and that infernal Hindu disappeared into a secret passage from that temple just now; but whether they have gone to the Fort, or to the hills, or to Towli, I can't say."

"But what are they gone for? Can you say that?"

"No; but I have a suspicion."

I was seated on the table, and, as Snelgrove courteously put it, making night hideous with my fiddle and my bow. He was still turning over the papers rather carelessly, when a quick, hard footstep sounded on the floor, and Brodie himself stood over against us.

"May I ask what you are looking for in that trunk?"

"That depends. Is it your trunk?"

The Baronet's blue eyes flashed angrily as he put his question.

Snelgrove's small dark ones by no means fell before them as he answered it.

The Scot drew himself up fiercely and turned to me:

"I must say, Lascelles, I should hardly have thought you would let any one rummage among my papers in my absence and in your presence."

"To tell the truth, Brodie, I opened the trunk myself with one of my own keys; I could not quite understand why, or by whom, it had been locked. There's no use being angry; you know that those two trunks are far more mine than they are yours."

"Is that paper yours?"

"Until I had opened the trunk I supposed it to contain nothing of yours; but, if you want to be told the truth, it seemed to me possible that among the papers left by poor De Vesel in it, some clue might be found to your recent conduct."

"My conduct!" he said, rather weakly.

"Yes, your rather rum behaviour of late. To-night, for instance."

I was still seated on the table, and still nursed my violin. He looked down upon me with an odd expression. For the life of me I could not quite make it out.

"To-night?" he echoed, a very slight flush rising about the region of his cheekbones.

"Yes; what happened to you after you left the Farmer-Copears—on the road by the Residency?"

The flush deepened, and yet his expression was not easy to understand. He turned away.

"What the devil does it matter to you?" he said hurriedly, and with considerable heat. "Since when has a subaltern to explain to his captain all his doings? Very soon, I suppose, I will have to ask for leave to stay out longer than you."

Now, Brodie and I had been very good friends; and between us, until now, had been no talk of senior officer and junior. It sounded unnatural and unpleasant to hear him fly off on that tack.

"Don't be an owl, Brodie; you'd better scoot, Snel, and leave us to have it out comfortably. Finish your peg and take another cheroot with you."

But little Snelgrove looked rather dogged.

"Before I go, Cox, I think it would be well to explain the situation more fully to your young friend. I am not used to being accused of meddling with other people's papers."

The Highlander flared up again.

"You seem to be used enough to doing it!" he cried, with a suspicious appearance of willingness to lose his temper.

"I think," pursued Snelgrove, with a peculiar setting of his lips, "it would be well to explain to your young friend that he has developed habits and become involved in intimacies that will probably soon bring him into discussion far more public than ours; and that explanations are likely to be demanded having far more serious consequences than any enquiries of ours. What were you doing in the temple of Vishnu near the Residency to-night?" he asked, turning sharply towards the youth.

His earlier remarks had been ostentatiously addressed to me.

"I have not been near the temple to-night—no nearer than you have," the Scotchman blurted out.

Any one coming from the Farmer-Copears' bungalow must have been pretty near it.

Snelgrove sneered openly.

"We have been very near it, indeed!" he answered. "We have been in it!"

"Well, what were you doing there, then?" retorted Brodie, with a passionate laugh. "Is it only a captains' quarter?"

"We were trying to see what you were up to, if you want to know. Lascelles, you had better restore his handkerchief to your young friend."

"We found it on the steps of the temple," I explained, giving it him.

He turned on his heel and went into his own bedroom.

"Good night, gentlemen! You should offer yourselves to the Intelligence Department. Pray don't hurry away, Snelgrove; you will doubtless wish to discuss your next move with Lascelles."

## CHAPTER III.

FOR some days nothing peculiar occurred at Katara, and Brodie was either more cautious or he had really cooled in his palatial and Brahminical intimacy. But his manner displayed an intense and bitter sense of irritation against myself, and our intercourse was chilly and constrained.

It was nearly a week after the dinner-party at the Farmer-Copears' before I left my carte-de-digestion. And when I did call they said it was "darwásaband" as regarded the mem sahib; but the doctor sahib himself was in, and made me go in for a smoke and a talk.

"Look here, Cox," he said presently, "it's on my mind to ask you something."

He seemed rather shamefaced about it, and explained that it might seem unprofessional to do what he was about doing; but he had looked at it all ways.

"And I think it's the best way to be of use to the chap himself."

"You're going to talk about the Baronet?" I observed calmly.

He nodded.

"You see, Lascelles, I know you've been deuced kind to the lad, especially when he's had fever, and it's just those great big hulking-looking fellows who get it worst."

—Farmer-Copear himself was nothing like so long as his name.—"Well, and I saw by your face here the other night that you already twigged something was up there. The mischief is, the whole station will twig it soon, unless there's an alteration; and that kind of thing marks a fellow all his service. Do you mind telling me what you know?"

When I had told him, he shook his head.

"Worse, a darned sight, than I thought," he muttered, looking absently out along the way to Towli. "Will you believe it if I tell you he himself is absolutely unconscious of all this?"

"All what?"

"He knows nothing of the picture you saw him paint, I would bet anything. I know he is utterly unaware of having been at Vishnu's temple with Kalbadévi Rao that night."

"He has consulted you?"

"Yes; but he is on a totally wrong tack. He thinks it is epilepsy, or catalepsy. He only knows that certain large gaps occur in his memory now; that, as he puts it, periods of many hours are missing out of his life; and what has happened to them he can't guess."

The doctor paused to pull the straw out of a trichy and while he lighted it.

"He says he is often terribly done up after these gaps, as if he had walked miles and climbed mountains; and sometimes he feels as if he was coming to after a drinking bout. And he thinks it's catalepsy!" concluded the doctor, with a pitying smile.

"Have you any suspicion what it is, if it isn't catalepsy?"

"I know very well what it is," replied the little man, with some complacency.

"You've heard of hypnotism?"

"Mostly bunkum, isn't it?"

"There's a deal of bunkum, my dear Cox, hanging loose on most subjects, from theology to medicine. And the public like the bunkum best, naturally; 'the public' being the biggest bunkum of all. But there's a deuced solid residuum underneath hypnotism. Praps it's devilment; praps it's animal magnetism; but there it is. It's rather a new idea in Europe—hypnotism—but it's deadly old here—in Asia."

"Cheel! cheel!" screamed the brown kites outside, "cheel! cheel!" as they swooped through the utterly dry, utterly clear and living air; it was rather pleasant in the verandah, with one's legs high up on the arms of the long chair, one's peg at hand, and the cheroot—excellent at twenty-five rupees per thousand—between one's lips. The shadow of the great cork-tree lay cool around, its fallen tassels of fragrant snow whitening the ground. I settled myself luxuriously in my chair and prepared to be interested.

"And you think this is hypnotism?"

He nodded.

"What you tell me makes it a practical certainty. But that doesn't land us near the bottom of the business. Why should Kalbadévi Rao suddenly take to hocus-pocus with Brodie? And how does he work it?"

"Don't they all set to work in the same way?"

"Anything but; and these Orientals have no doubt very special methods, and very peculiar secrets of their own. My own theory is that in such a case as this the 'hypnotism' isn't given neat."

"Eh?"

"Well, it isn't solely done by immaterial methods. When Kalbadévi Rao presses his fingers close to Brodie's nostrils, you bet there's something druggy on his nasty fingers. When a peculiar powder is burned behind Vishnu's image, you needn't believe

it was purely to give light. It was to assist the hypnotic suggestions of the Brahmin."

"And the primary mystery of all," I added intelligently, "is what first set Brodie off? What brought him in touch with Pertab Singh and the Palace? I'm quite certain it followed instantly on that first rummage among poor De Vesci's papers."

"De Vesci was often delirious before he snuffed out; he didn't say much to notice; but one night I sat up with him, and he seemed to bother a good deal about Kali's Shoulder; and he talked of the pearl on it. Doctors hear too much raving to be given to remember it; but—I say, Cox, it might be worth while to look over those papers of his."

I reminded him of the row Snelgrove and I had already got into on their account.

"Never mind. It's about our only clue, and by neglecting to follow it we may let that lad go to the bad altogether. And I know old Mahratti pretty well. Are you dining at the Colonel's to-night?"

"No; but the Baronet is."

"And we are. But I'll get a call from the hospital and send the wife alone. You and I can rummage then undisturbed."

It was distinctly a plot; but it seemed the only way, and we acted on it. At first, however, with less result than we had hoped for. The elephant-trunk was empty, the Baronet having evidently made a clean sweep of its contents.

"H'm! Rather a sell; but very strong negative evidence," muttered the doctor. "Didn't you say there were two trunks? Anything in the other?"

The other had been put into my bedroom; it was a goodish old trunk, and my bearer had put some of my kit into it. This we removed, and underneath found much the same sort of litter as had been in that now emptied. A few old "Pioneers," a bundle of "At Home" and "Honorary Member" cards, some ball programmes, some band ditto, some old railway guides, and a few very crude sketches.

On the back of some of the cards were rough plans, here and there lettered with a few brief explanations and references. The sketches were all of places in the hills

towards Mahableshtar, and the doctor said they made a road-map when taken together in the right order. There were eleven of them, and each of them bore what he said was the name of one of the months in the old Mahratti language. Now, these month-names had no reference to anything in the subject or appearance of the sketches; and the twelfth month was missing. The most elaborate of the plans, however, bore the name of the twelfth month. It was drawn to scale, and in the centre was an oval mark.

"Here's a sum for you," I said, throwing him a band programme with a sort of double proportion sum on it. "Dove's egg equals two hundred carats; Peahen's egg equals six hundred carats; Mountain of Snow say fifty thousand pounds; Kali's Tear equals one hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

"Well," said the doctor, "there is a pearl called Snow Mountain belonging to the Maharajah of Cuddalore—the biggest in the world, they say; but poor De Vesci was quite wrong in his sum. Granting that a pearl of two hundred carats was worth fifty thousand, one of three times the size would be worth far more than three times as much. As to the actual value of the Mountain of Snow I've not a notion, nor have I ever heard its size. One would suppose from this it was as big as a pigeon's egg; seemingly De Vesci thought, however, that it was not the biggest in the world—that another existed somewhere called Kali's Tear, three times as large."

"And somewhere on Kali's Shoulder he thought it lay hidden, eh?"

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OF

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 237.—THIRD SERIES.

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WE are all the slaves of man, my dear Lady Bracondale. You are kept in town because Parliament insists on keeping your husband; and I am kept in town because—oh, because the most capricious young man in London happens to be my son!"

An afternoon call in the first week of August is distinctly an anomaly, and seems to partake somewhat of the nature of a visit of condolence. Parliament was sitting late this year, and those hapless wives who considered it their duty to wait in town until their legislating husbands were released, visited one another, and were visited by the one or two acquaintances detained in London by other causes, in a manner which betrayed a combination of martyrdom and shamefacedness.

Lady Bracondale, who was nothing if not a personification of duty done, or in the act of doing, was being consoled with, or called upon, on this particular August afternoon, by two distinct sets of sympathising acquaintances—two sets, which, in spite of placid words and pretty speeches, seemed to be entirely incapable of amalgamation—Mrs. Romaine, and Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter, who had arrived a few minutes later. And it was to Mrs. Pomeroy that Lady Bracondale—who had a peculiar gift for saying in a stately and condescending manner the things which quicker perceptions would have recognised as not being precisely the best things to

be said under the circumstances—turned, as Mrs. Romaine stopped speaking.

"I suppose Mrs. Romaine looks upon you as the exception that proves her rule," she said. "For it is not a case of manly compulsion with you, I believe? I hope your sister goes on well?"

Mrs. Pomeroy, having neither husband nor son, was detained in town by the presence in her house of the sister whom she had visited earlier in the year, and who had spent the last month under the care of a London doctor. But her tone was as placid as ever as she replied:

"Thank you, I believe they consider her nearly recovered, for the time being. She hopes to go home this week. And then Maud and I will go and pay some country visits. We don't think of going abroad this year. I shouldn't feel easy to be out of England while my sister remains in this state."

"But that's not compulsion at all!" exclaimed Mrs. Romaine gaily. "You are acting entirely on your own impulse. Now, just consider my hard case. We were going to Pontresina; you know I'm very fond of Pontresina; it's such a dear, bright, amusing place. And we were to have started yesterday. Now, imagine my feelings when, two nights ago, that boy of mine came home, and said that, on the whole, he thought he'd rather not go abroad this year; he's taken with an enthusiasm for his profession, if you please, and he must needs stay somewhere quiet—so he says—and work at it. I must do him the justice to say that he was awfully apologetic, dear fellow!" Mrs. Romaine laughed her little affected, maternal laugh. "He was very anxious that I should go without him, and even offered to give up his own plan when he



found how preposterous I thought that part of his idea."

There was not the faintest difference in Mrs. Romaine's voice by which it would have been possible to tell that her last statement was even less veracious than any other part of her speech, and that Julian's proposal to give up his plan was a figment of the moment only.

"And then of course I gave in," she continued with affected self-mockery. "Of course, he knew I should—the wretch! And we're to have a cottage on the river, and spend six weeks there."

She finished with a little grimace, and Lady Bracondale observed politely:

"I'm afraid you will find it rather dull."

"I shall find it very dull," returned Mrs. Romaine with ingenuous frankness. "I shall be bored to death. But, then, you all know that I am really a very ridiculous woman, and if my lord and master is content, there is nothing more to be said. He's kind enough to assure me that there are lots of nice people about! I don't know what kind of nice people one is likely to find about the river in August and September, but I take his word for it."

"I believe the Comptons have a houseboat somewhere," observed Miss Pomeroy.

It was her first contribution to the conversation, and it was made apparently rather because conventionality by this time demanded a remark of some sort from her, than from any interest in the subject. Before any reply could be made, the door opened, and Marston Loring was announced.

Mrs. Romaine had been looking rather sharp-featured and haggard, and there was a great restlessness in her eyes. It seemed to leap up and then settle suddenly into comparative repose as they rested on Marston Loring, and as he turned to shake hands with her she greeted him gaily. It was their first meeting since the night of the Academy soirée, but Loring's manner was absolutely unmoved. His greeting to her differed in nowise from his greeting to the other two ladies, and if that fact in itself involved a subtle change in his demeanour towards her, the change was observed by one pair of eyes only—a pair of demure brown eyes. Miss Pomeroy had been a good deal interested in Marston Loring's comings and goings during the fortnight she spent in Queen Anne Street.

Mrs. Romaine seemed to have something

on her mind which preoccupied it to the exclusion of any personal consideration of Loring or his demeanour.

"I thought you were gone," she said lightly. "What are you doing in town to-day, may one ask, when you were booked to start for Norway yesterday?"

"Business," he returned in a tone which addressed the whole company rather than any member of it individually. "I am investing in a Scotch moor, and I can't leave London till I have signed and sealed."

There was a delicate implication of wealth about the statement which seemed to give a curious fillip to the conversation; and an animated little discussion ensued on Scotland, its charms and its disadvantages.

Mrs. Romaine held her part in the discussion with unfailing readiness and vivacity, and as the subject exhausted itself she rose to take leave. She said good-bye in her usual charming manner to her hostess, and to Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter, and then she turned to Loring:

"By-the-bye," she said carelessly, "I've a piece of property of yours in the carriage. Did you know you had lost something when you called the other day? No, I shan't tell you what it is, you very careless person! But I'll give it you if you like to come down for it."

She turned away with a little laugh, and went out of the room. Loring followed her perforce; and there was an ugly smile on his face as he did so. At the foot of the stairs she paused; then with a quick glance towards an open door which led into a dining-room, she went rapidly towards it, signing to him to follow her. Once within the room, she turned and faced him. She was smiling still, but the smile was stiff and mechanical, and her eyes, as she fixed them on his face, were desperately anxious. There was a curious ring of conscious helplessness, and reliance on the man to whom she spoke, about her voice as she began to speak.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said. "I'm so glad to see you. I'm rather perplexed. Julian has taken it into his head to stop in town, or, rather, close to town. He won't go abroad; he won't visit. Can you tell me the reason? Will you try and find out the reason? May I rely on you? But of course I know I may."

There was a tone almost of relief in her voice, as if in the mere making of the confidence, in the sense of companionship

and support it gave her, she found some sort of ease.

And Loring smiled again as he met her eyes.

"I'm sorry to have to dispel an illusion which is so flattering to me," he said, with the slightest possible accentuation of his usual quiet cynicism of manner. "But it's useless to assume that I can be of any further service to you."

He stopped, watching with keen, relentless eyes the effect of his words. A startled look came to the face turned towards him, so strange in its combination of anxiety and artificiality. The eyebrows were lifted and contracted with a quick movement of perplexity. Evidently she believed that she had not fully understood him, for she did not speak, and he went on:

"Your son and I have quarrelled. He has insulted me grossly. For the future we are strangers to one another. Consequently you will see that I shall be no longer able to keep him out of mischief."

There was an indescribable tone in his voice as he spoke the last word, ominous and vindictive. And as he spoke, Mrs. Romayne's face seemed to grow haggard and old, and her eyes dilated.

"It can be put right," she said, in a quick, uncertain voice. "He will apologise. You will forgive——"

Loring interrupted her, very coldly and incisively.

"He will not apologise!" he said. "And I should not accept any apology. I needn't suggest, of course, that, under the circumstances, our acquaintance, much as I regret this, had perhaps better cease."

They faced each other for another moment, and into Mrs. Romayne's eyes there crept a sick despair strangely incongruous with the surface appearance of the position. Then she seemed to recover herself as if with a tremendous effort of will. She drew herself up, bowed her head with grave dignity, and moved to leave the room. He held the door open for her with an absolutely expressionless countenance. She passed down the hall to where the servant was waiting at the door, went out, and got into her carriage alone.

Loring stood at the foot of the stairs watching her, and then turned with a vindictive contentment in his eyes, and went upstairs again to the drawing-room.

The two elder ladies were sitting with their heads very close together as he opened the drawing-room door, evidently deep in some question of domestic im-

portance. And standing by a conservatory window at the other end of the room, a rather bored-looking figure, in its solitary girlishness, was Maud Pomeroy. The occasion being, as has been said, something of an anomaly, conventions were not so strict as usual. Lady Bracondale just glanced up with a vague smile as Loring reappeared, and then became absorbed in conversation as he strolled across to Maud Pomeroy. She looked up at him with a faint smile.

"Has Mrs. Romayne gone?" she said.

He signified a careless assent, and then said:

"You are looking rather bored, do you know, Miss Pomeroy? Suppose we go and look at the flowers until we're wanted?"

She hesitated a moment, and then moved idly into the conservatory, looking back at Loring with a pretty smile as he followed her.

"I was a little bored," she confessed. "It is very kind of you to come and amuse me."

For the next moment or two Loring could hardly be said to prove himself very amusing. He sauntered round the little conservatory at his companion's side, his eyes fixed keenly upon her impassive profile with something very calculating in their depths. Miss Pomeroy also was apparently absorbed in thought, and did not notice his silence.

"You are a great friend of the Romaynes, are you not?" she said at last, in her thin, even, very "proper" tones.

Loring glanced at her again.

"Well," he said, "that's not a question that it's particularly easy for me to answer to-day. I have been on fairly intimate terms with them, as you know. But do you know what that kind of thing sometimes leads to?"

Miss Pomeroy shook her head.

"Well, there is such a thing as knowing people too well," said Loring deliberately. "And then you find out little traits that don't do. To tell you the truth, Romayne and I have quarrelled."

"I'm glad of that," said Miss Pomeroy softly.

He looked at her quickly, but he was not quick enough to catch the spiteful gleam in her eyes.

"Would it be inquisitive to enquire why?" he said.

"I don't think Mr. Romayne is a nice young man," was the answer. "I would rather people I like——" She broke off

in pretty confusion. "I would rather you weren't a friend of his, Mr. Loring. I think there's a great deal about him that nobody knows."

"Indeed!" said Loring, interrogatively and quietly.

"You see," she said, with charming seriousness, "I think a girl can often feel whether a man is nice or nasty quicker than another man can. Mr. Loring, has Mr. Romaine ever said anything to you—Oh, please don't think it's very odd of me to say such things to you! Has he ever said anything that made you think he might be married?"

There was a hardly perceptible pause—a hardly perceptible flash of comprehension on Loring's face, and the vindictive satisfaction in his eyes deepened.

"What makes you ask me that?" he said, in a tone which seemed to fence gravely with the suggestion rather than to repudiate it.

Miss Pomeroy responded with growing conviction.

"Because I'm quite sure that he is married. And, of course, as he doesn't own it, there must be something—something not nice about it. And it does seem to me so wrong that people should like him so much when he isn't a bit what they think he is."

The man's eyes and the girl's eyes met at that moment for the first time. The girl's were perfectly clear, mild, and expressionless, and into the man's there stole a cynical tinge of admiration.

"By Jove," he said to himself, "she is clever!"

At that instant Mrs. Pomeroy's voice was heard from the drawing-room calling placidly for her daughter. And Miss Pomeroy moved forward with graceful promptitude into the drawing-room.

"We shall meet in Scotland by-and-by, I believe," said Loring pleasantly, as he shook hands with Miss Pomeroy. "You were to be at the Stewarts', I believe, in the last week of August, and so am I. I shall look forward to it. Good-bye, Miss Pomeroy."

"Good-bye, Mr. Loring."

A few minutes later Loring also took leave of Lady Bracondale and went away. The satisfaction was stronger than ever in his eyes. Maud Pomeroy's words had somehow or other carried instantaneous conviction to his mind, and in the fact he believed them to contain he saw certain social ruin for Julian Romaine.

"He's done for himself all round," he said to himself as he let himself into his rooms half an hour later. "That nice little house in Chelsea will be to let next season."

At that same moment, in the manager's room at the offices of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company, Julian Romaine was standing by the table, looking down at Ramsay as the latter sat leaning back in his chair, indifferent enough in attitude, but with a hard intensity of expression in his dull eyes. Julian had evidently just risen, pushing back his chair, the back of which he was gripping almost convulsively. His face was ashen, his eyes were dilated with an expression of desperate, intolerable temptation.

"I'll do it," he was saying in a harsh, unnatural voice. "I'll do it, Ramsay. Shake hands on it."

### ROYAL KISSES.

IT is a fact, though not generally known, that kissing was first introduced into this country by Royalty. The British monarch, Vortigern, gave a banquet in honour of his Scandinavian allies, at which Rowena, the beautiful daughter of Hengist, was present. During the proceedings the Princess, after pressing a brimming beaker to her lips, saluted the astonished and delighted King with a little kiss, "after the manner of her people."

The giving or withholding of a kiss by Royalty has often been fraught with great issues. Thus when, in 1169, Henry the Second refused to give Becket the kiss of peace, the usual pledge of reconciliation in vogue at that time, it was accepted as fatal, and so it subsequently proved.

The most honourable Royal kiss on record was that which Queen Margaret of France imprinted in the presence of the whole Court on the lips of the ugliest man in the kingdom, Alain Chartier, whom she one day found asleep. To those around her she said:

"I do not kiss the man, but the mouth that has uttered so many charming things."

Amongst the serious kisses may be mentioned those of Antony and Cleopatra, and Henry the Eighth and Anne Boleyn. Both of these, it is said, shook an empire and destroyed a religion.

It is not often that a maiden refuses the kiss of her monarch, but there are instances

of such an honour being declined. Thus, in 1209, when the German Emperor, Otho the Fourth, visited Florence, he was present at a ceremony in the baptistery of San Giovanni. Among the ladies present was the wife of a certain Messer Berto, with her daughter, Gualdrada, who attracted all eyes by her singular beauty. The Emperor asked Messer Berto, who happened to be near him, the name of the lady. The father replied that she was the daughter of one who would give him leave to kiss her if he so desired. Gualdrada overheard the words, and rising from her seat blushing with indignation, she turned to her father and requested him to make no such promises for her. The Emperor was so much struck with the courage and modesty of the young lady, that he immediately called up a noble youth, named Guido Beisangue, on whom he bestowed her in marriage, with a large territory in the Casentino as her dowry, and the title of Count. A chamber in the Castle of Poppi, in the Casentino, is still shown as the room of the good Gualdrada, and her name is still more honourably transmitted to posterity by Dante.

Kissing is reduced to an absurdity sometimes by Royalty, as when our monarchs used to debase themselves by kissing the feet of beggars on Maunday Thursday. But even this was outdone by Queen Matilda, the wife of Henry the Second, who, according to Matthew Paris, filled her house with lepers, and washed and kissed their feet, to the horror of her brother, King David, when she summoned him to her presence in the hope of persuading him to do likewise. The King very wisely declined.

Kissing appears to have formed part of the marriage service, an allusion to which is made in "King Richard the Second," where the Duke of Northumberland announces to the King that he is to be sent to Pontefract, and his wife to be banished to France. On hearing the unwelcome news, the King pathetically addressed himself to Northumberland:

Doubly divorced! Bad men, you violate  
A twofold marriage, 'twixt my crown and me,  
And then betwixt me and my married wife.  
Let me unkiss the oath 'twixt thee and me  
And yet not so, for with a kiss 'twas made.

Going farther back in history, it is related that on one occasion Charlemagne caught his secretary kissing the Emperor's daughter at midnight. The lady, that her lover's footsteps might not be traced in the snow, carried him home on her back. The

Emperor heard of it, and made her take the secretary for the rest of her life, which she was nothing loth to do.

A quaint story is told of Whitlocke, Cromwell's Ambassador to the Court of Queen Christina, of Sweden, that her Majesty one day, accompanied by her ladies, dined with him. At the same time she requested him to teach her suite the common English mode of salutation. Whitlocke at once complied with her wish, and soon found his pupils apt scholars, in spite of a little shy reserve on their part, when first following his instructions.

When Cardinal John of Lorraine was presented to the Duchess of Savoy, she gave him her hand to kiss, greatly to the indignation of the irate Churchman. "How, madam!" exclaimed he; "am I to be treated in this manner? I kiss the Queen, my mistress, who is the greatest queen in the world, and shall I not kiss you, a dirty little Duchess? I would have you know I have kissed as handsome ladies, and of as great or greater family than yours!" Without more ado he made for the lips of the proud Portuguese Princess, and, despite the resistance, kissed her thrice on her mouth before he released her, with an exultant laugh.

A very interesting story is told of Edward the Fourth, who sometimes applied personally to the rich for pecuniary aid. He is said to have been one of the handsomest men of his age, until worn out by debauchery, and was, moreover, a particular favourite with the ladies. On one occasion he called upon a rich widow, and asked for a benevolence. She at once gave him twenty pounds, saying, "By my troth! for thy lovely countenance thou shalt have even twenty pounds." The King, who had looked for scarce half that sum, "thanked her, and lovingly kissed her," thereby gaining her heart and purse; for she doubled her benevolence, paying another twenty pounds, "because she considered the kiss of a King so precious a jewel."

A King can give a Judas kiss as well as any one else. An instance of this is found in the treacherous kiss which, in French fashion, James the First imprinted on either cheek of his ex-favourite, the infamous Earl of Somerset, implicated in Overbury's mysterious murder in the Bloody Tower, when, under Chief Justice Coke's warrant, Somerset was arrested. James, who had secretly ordered the

arrest, kissed Somerset in seeming friendliness, muttering, however, as the door closed behind the Earl: "Go thy ways; I'll see thy face no more."

King Charles the Second was partial to kisses from the fair sex, and it is recorded that when he was making his triumphal progress through the land, certain ladies who were presented to him, instead of kissing the Royal hand, in their simplicity held up their own heads to be kissed by the King. The King excused the blunder, and accepted the new form. His father is credited with having been the author of the following lines:

My heart hath ached  
With the vain agony of longing love,  
To look upon those blooming cheeks, to kiss  
Those red and innocent lips.

Some historic interest attaches to the famous salute offered in Continental fashion to her Majesty, Queen Victoria, when she went to France, after the Crimean War, and Napoleon the Third kissed her on the cheek.

Here is an incident which happened to Mrs. C. A. Wilkinson on her presentation to William the Fourth, and which is recorded in the "Reminiscences of the Court and Times of King Ernest of Hanover." Mrs. Wilkinson was a very pretty girl, and had been asked by the noble editor to have her portrait taken for the "Book of Beauty." She was duly presented at the Drawing Room by her mother, and was handed by her grandfather, General Sir Thomas Dallas, a great friend of William the Fourth.

"Halloa!" said his Majesty; "what's that, Dallas?"

"That's my grand-daughter, sir."

"Here, here, come back, my dear!" said the King. "I must have another kiss. It's only you and I, Dallas, who have such grand-daughters," and the blunt old sailor King gave her no mere salute of ceremony, but a real good smack.

Mrs. Papendick states that King George the Third and Queen Caroline witnessed the Lord Mayor's Show in 1761 from the balcony of Mr. Barclay's house, opposite Bow Church, Cheapside. The hearty old man, an octogenarian, had entertained in the same house the two earlier Georges. Without abandoning earlier Quaker simplicity, he went beyond it a little in order to do honour to the young Queen, hanging his balcony and room with a brilliant crimson damask cloth. The King, on

arriving, fluttered all the female Friends and set their tuckers in agitation by kissing them all round. The Queen smiled with dignity, the King laughed, and on their passing into another room, the King's young brother followed the example, the young Quakeresses nothing loth.

Coming down to more modern times, a Paris paper a few years ago stated that when the King of Sweden visited the Pope, instead of taking his Holiness's hand and kissing it, he kissed him on both cheeks. The same paper added that the last infraction of the Papal etiquette occurred when General Grant went to see Pius the Ninth, and shook hands with him, saying: "Very glad to see you, sir."

There are many anecdotes told of the young King of Spain, and his kisses. When Adelina Patti had the honour of singing before the Queen Regent of Spain, and the Royal lady had complimented her on her singing, Patti asked permission to see the little King. The great singer remarked that he was the only Sovereign in Europe with whom she was not personally acquainted. Alfonso the Thirteenth was brought into the room in his nurse's arms. Patti made a deep curtsy to him, and pressed his little dimpled hand to her lips. But the Queen interposed, saying: "My son shall not be the first Spaniard who is so ungallant as to permit a lady to kiss his hand. Allow him to revenge himself with a kiss." Obediently Alfonso threw his fat little arms round the neck of the prima donna, and bestowed upon her a most warm and unkingly kiss.

Another story told of the "Youngest King" is that on Sundays the thirteenth Alfonso is "At Home" to the little sons and daughters of the Spanish Court dignitaries. Part of the entertainment consists of dancing. One afternoon the four-year-old King, after dancing with a senorita of his own age, tried to kiss the damsel, according to the custom at these juvenile entertainments. The little one, however, retreated before the Royal salute. Next Sunday the two danced together again; but when the lady tried to make up for her sins of omission of the previous dance, and offered to kiss her monarch, the latter, instead of giving her his cheek, offered her the back of his baby hand, saying: "I am the King."

One more anecdote of the same monarch. On the occasion of his second birthday a grand party was given to all

the children in Madrid. In order to prevent his subjects from behaving in an unduly familiar manner towards his Majesty, the children were warned that any child who committed the serious offence of attempting to kiss the King would be liable to undergo the penalty of being kept in for eight days. By this threat the King escaped numerous caresses.

A most amusing jest was played one day on the Sultan Haroun al Raschid by his Court jester, Abu Nawas. The two had been discussing the correctness of the assertion of the jester that an apology was often worse than the offence. The jester undertook to furnish proof of the correctness of his assertion before daybreak. The Caliph, who was in one of his savage moods, swore that he would have his jester's head struck off if he failed to perform his promise. Shortly afterwards, Haroun al Raschid retired to his harem, where the first greeting he received was a kiss from a rough-bearded face. Calling instantly for a light and the ever-ready executioner, he found, to his no small astonishment, that it was Abu Nawas, who had waylaid and kissed him in the dark.

"What on earth does this conduct mean, you miserable scoundrel?" asked the enraged monarch.

"I most humbly beg your Majesty's pardon," replied the jester, making a profound obeisance, "I thought it was your Majesty's favourite wife."

"What!" shrieked Haroun al Raschid. "Truly this apology is worse than the offence!"

"That is precisely what I undertook to prove to your Majesty before the night was out."

And with that the jester hurried out of the door as fast as he could, while one of the Sultan's slippers flew after him.

## UP ETNA IN THE DOG-DAYS.

THE little rocky speck of Ustica, with its colony of convicts, is sinking fast under our starboard quarter in the soft sea haze of early dawn. Over the bows, across a dozen miles of blue and silver, stretches the rugged north Sicilian coast, from Cap Orlando to Mount Pellegrino in the west, which, with a film of ethereal drapery on its broad brow, keeps watch over the beautiful city of Palermo. With

every throb of the propeller towers and domes take clearer shape, catching new gleams from the orient, and ranging themselves in fantastic outline above the rock-girt throne on which for a score of centuries Palermo "la felice" has sat a queen.

It is the end of July, and the last breath of air that I felt was in Naples twelve hours ago, since which the good ship under me has steadily done her fourteen knots an hour through a tepid, waveless sea. I am no stranger to the delights of the torrid zone, or to melting moments in low latitudes, but I can recall few hotter nights, even in India or Fiji, than this night has been on board the "Marco Minghetti," three thousand two hundred tons burden, bound *via Porti* for Odessa. The vessel is of Scottish build, like many others of the Florio-Rubattino fleet, with everything of the best, from the patent steam winch on the fore-castle to the steering-wheel on the quarter-deck, which bears unblushingly to this hour the homely name of "Loudon Castle," over which used to float the red ensign in the Clyde. The boats are well-found and well managed, commander, cooks, and cabins being all excellent, with but two drawbacks: the very "mixed" company of passengers, and a conspicuous lack of civility on the part of the stewards. It is a custom in this and other Italian lines for second-class passengers to have the run of the quarter-deck; the heavy first-class fare of forty lire from Naples to Palermo, as against twenty-five lire second-class, entitling the passenger only to what is, or is supposed to be, a more elaborate dinner and a more highly-decorated cabin. The result is that, with an inadequate supply of deck seats, one usually finds every resting-place "rushed" by a medley mob of noisy, garlicky, second class travellers, in defiance of the "riservato al Primo posto," displayed conspicuously at the gangway. For roomy manners, refined rudeness, and general odoriferous unpleasantness it would be hard to beat an Italian deck-load bound for the Levant in the dog-days. However, many years of vagabond life have dulled the fine edge of an overwrought squeamishness, and an "al fresco" dinner, with draughts of delicious iced Lillibee and a beaker of Malmsey—grown in Lipari—drove away all discontent, and set my soul atune with the supreme tranquillity of the glorious summer night.

And now that those six weary hours

between decks have rolled away, and a cool breath from the gates of morning brings back a sense of life, if not of elasticity, I forget the heavily upholstered couch that set sleep at defiance; the gruff, corpulent commercial traveller over whose multifarious collection of baggage I was forced as best I could to climb to my bed, and whose sole response to any suggestion I had to offer in the matter of ventilation, etc., was a surly snarl of "Facci come piace"; the onslaught of what Pliny or somebody euphemistically calls "*animalia æstiva*"; these and such-like motes in the sunbeam may well be banished from one's memory in presence of the glorious beauty that lies outspread before me as the ship comes slowly round the end of the mole, and with a roar and a rattle her anchors rush down into the liquid marble of the harbour. In half an hour I am treading the streets of Palermo, before the trams are up, and while as yet the morning journals are wet and sticky.

Surely there is not a more beautiful home of men on earth than this old Phœnician city of Panormos, with her stretch of fields and fruit-gardens clothing the broad plain of the Conca d' Oro right up to the feet of her noble mountain walls. Where are there brighter, busier quays; a nobler shrine than the Cappella Palatina; a more exquisite garden than the palm-shaded Flora; a merrier, madder highway than the long Cassaro that goes winding out like a wide, dust-covered riband through the stately Porta Nuova to the base of Moureale? It is the notable festa of Sant' Anna, and the light-hearted Palermitans have given themselves over in a body to a right honouring of the mother of the Mother-Maid. Bands of musicians are parading the streets. From end to end the Toledo is filled by a dense moving throng of chattering, laughing holiday-makers. Every one, man, woman, and child, who is not gnawing a colossal water-melon, is quaffing "*granito d' arancia*"—a celestial frozen orange compound—or sipping "*sor-betti*" from one of the long line of ice and syrup and sweet-stuff vendors whose trays block up the narrow footways, and whose strident accents, as they cry their wares, lend an added terror to the babel of sounds. Water-carriers, with their long-drawn, agonising "*Acqua-a-a-a*," like the cry of a mortal perishing for want of a drop; bawling newspaper boys; hawkers of toys, and fruit, and matches; strapping sunbrowned

girls with armfuls of exquisite yellow roses and natty little clumps of strawberries tied posy-like round the end of a slip of wood, and daintily decked with a spray of leaf or fern; acolytes at every church door ringing in wandering souls to mass with a hand-bell, suggestive of an auction inside; cabs in slow procession with the drivers carrying a fan or an umbrella, and the horses in cock-feathers and sun-helmets; swarms of untidy-looking soldiers in every species of gear and garb, and their officers in light blue trousers of such miraculous fit as to suggest that their nether limbs have been poured into them in a molten state; groups of dark-eyed saucy maidens with attendant mashers in wide-breasted pink shirts and blue neckties; an old mummy-faced shoe-black, who insistently raps his box with his blacking-brush, and to whom a still mummler old lady, bent in body but with the air of a grande dame, offers in passing a pinch of rappee, of which the rapper, with a grin that would make a horse shy, thrusts half into his nostrils and the other half drops with tender solicitude into the recesses of a doubtful pocket; strings of wooden mule-carts painted from shaft-tip to backboard in all the hues of the rainbow, with blood and thunder battle-pieces on their side panels, or St. Lorenzo on his gridiron, or the tortures of saintly Agata, or the glorious horrors of the Sicilian Vespers, when the soil of what is now yonder cypress-shadowed Campo Santo, a mile away under the hill, was drenched with Gallic blood, and all Sicily leapt from the yoke of the hated Angevin. Surely it would be hard to match in any other city so gay a scene! Palermo is beyond question the talkiest town on earth; every man speaks as if he were hailing a ship at sea in the roaring forties; it must be in the air, for the very donkeys bray more acutely and with slighter provocation than any four-footed ones I know. It is either Cicero or Baedeker—or both—who has said that no Sicilian, young or old, is ever at a loss for a bon mot or a repartee. The Trinaerian vernacular has so little in common with the mellifluous Tuscan speech that I am not in a position to assay the quality of the wit that flies from lip to lip; but judging from the ripples of laughter and vivacious merriment that fill the air, there is plenty of it about.

After two or three days devoted to the dubious pleasures of sight-seeing in a scorching scirocco, I sank gasping and

weary on my bed at the "Hôtel de France" to snatch an hour's rest, and make up my mind—an exertion to which since landing I had been wholly unequal—as to the next step in my wanderings. It was the sacred hour of "Siesta," and Palermo was slumbering from end to end. Not a sound stirred the sultry atmosphere save the cicadas among the pepper-trees in the piazza hard by. I was in the pleasant borderland between waking and sleeping, too lazy to lift my cigar to my lips, when suddenly a deafening explosion rent the air and shook the crockery, and sent sharp echoes crackling and pealing among the mountain-tops. Again and again the ear-splitting din was repeated, and I wondered whether the firework factory next door was blowing up, or whether I was doomed to fall a victim to a hated tyrant foe, as did scores of the innocent Palermitans but thirty years ago under a storm of Bourbon shot and shell. I crept to the window, and peeping fearfully out through the "jalousies," looked down to where half-a-dozen coffee-coloured urchins were placidly playing "mora" in the shade of the old Palace of the Viceroy. Encouraged by their evident disregard of impending peril, I grew bolder, and turned my eyes to where the end of the narrow lane gave on to the blue waters of the bay; and there—so near that I seemed to sniff the sulphurous fumes—lay a British battle-ship, vomiting forth a pealing salute to the naval authorities, while the dear old red-cross ensign gleamed white against the turquoise sky.

It was the passing scare of the noisy arrival at Palermo of a division of the Mediterranean Fleet on that quiet Sunday afternoon, that fired my soul to pay a visit to that scene of real terror from which hourly messages of disaster were coming along the wires; with no lack, you may be sure, of those superlatives which are as the breath of life to an Italian newsmonger. When I had skimmed the froth from the latest telegram, there was left a residuum of solid fact on which to base the reality of an undoubtedly formidable outbreak at Etna, and I made up my mind to go and see it for myself. In a couple of hours I was being whirled along the stretch of coast washed by the Tyrrhenian sea, at the speed of at least twenty-five miles an hour, in what with exquisite pleasantry is officially designated as a "treno lampo" or "flash-train." The shades of night were falling as after a run of eighty miles we came to a

halt at the straggling village of Santa Catarina, a mile or two from the junction for Girgenti. Another half-hour, and I caught the first glimpse of the great burning mountain some forty miles away, over the crest of which hangs a vast canopy of lurid smoke; and as there are still ninety odd miles of circuitous rail between me and my bed at Catania, I may as well jot down a few items anent the past performances of the wayward giant, whose disturbances during the last thousand years have made him no mean rival to his younger Campanian brother.

There is no lack of trustworthy records, going back at least as far as B.C. 476, when a great eruption of Etna took place, of which Pindar has sung in an ode which Virgil imitated. It is interesting to compare the recurrent outbreaks of Etna with those of Vesuvius in historic times. In the five centuries before the Christian era the former broke out ten times, while the latter made no sign of response. In A.D. 79 came the catastrophe that obliterated Pompeii and her neighbours, after which for a thousand years Vesuvius was guilty but of eight eruptions, and Etna of three, none of them of importance as regards their destructive effect.

Then, however, came a period of growing Etnean activity between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries, culminating in the eruption of 1669, one of the most terrible ever known, when the Monti Rossi—three thousand feet—were upheaved and thousands of lives lost. During the scarcely less disastrous outbreak of 1538, although Vesuvius was quiescent—the Monte Nuovo, however, at Pozzuoli a few miles off being thrown up, and the whole face of the Solfatara district changed—the Campanian mountain made up for it a century later. In December, 1631, "a huge cloud of smoke and ashes rose in a conical form, casting a profound gloom over Naples in the middle of the day, and extending with incredible rapidity over the south of Italy as far as Tarentum," two hundred miles away; three thousand persons lost their lives. Since that date both mountains have been in almost continual rivalry, during the following two hundred years no fewer than thirty distinct outbreaks being recorded in Sicily, and forty-three from Vesuvius. It is to be noted that while in a general sense there has been a correspondence of phase between the two systems, there has but seldom been any approach to an exact



agreement of dates, the nearest being in 1694 and 1811, when eruptions occurred in each mountain within a month of each other; on eight other occasions there was an interval of less than six months. It can be shown that Etna has passed from an active state through a long period, say two thousand years, of depression to a second and more remarkable maximum condition of energy; while in the case of Vesuvius the depression has extended to a longer period. It was Dr. Daubeny who first proved, what few persons perhaps have realised, that in recent times both volcanoes have been in a condition of greater eruptive excitement than at any former known period.

Palmieri, the distinguished seismologist and observer, has given it as his opinion that during the last half-century the two volcanoes, which seemed previously to have had, so to say, an independent existence, have been establishing some sort of unison. Certainly, during this recent Sicilian outbreak, I can testify, from personal observation during many weeks, that Vesuvius had been in a state of unwonted excitement.

It is as yet early dawn when I sally forth from Catania, bent upon the ascent of yonder vast "Pillar of heaven and nourisher of snows"; knocking off one-fourth of the climb by taking, according to custom, a carriage through the long Strada di Etna as far as Nicolosi, at the present moment scared out of its wits by the near approach of the on-flowing lava, at the same time that it is reaping a not insignificant harvest of golden grain from the purses and pockets of swarms of foreigners who have gone forth to see the parturient mountain. I follow in their track out along the white and dusty road, through groves of pale lemons and tangled masses of heavy-fruited vines, on which the green of the grapes is just taking here and there a fleck of purple; out between interminable rows of glistening villas, the homes of Catanian merchants and citizens; out through bright but distinctly tumble-down Gravina, with its great genista clumps, and Mascaluda embedded in the thick of an old lava stream; out between the ruddy walls of Monte Rosso blushing in the eastern rays, past the little Bove crater, on to Torre Grifo, surely the hottest place on all this great hot mountain-side. Then at the end of a two hours' drive my vehicle disgorges me in front of a vine-clad hostelry at Nicolosi, where I find

an amount of excitement that is quite at variance with the wonted tranquillity of the little mountain village. I have taken a hundred and twenty minutes to do the nine miles from the "Hôtel Oriental," but then I am a couple of thousand feet higher than I was, and in the excessive heat more haste means worse speed. A cool seat under a spreading beech, a dish of melting "costolette divitello," superb bread, a water-melon, and a bottle of Bavarian beer, put me in good heart for the work before me, and as the clock strikes nine I throw away the stump of my cigar and summon my guide to the presence. With his assistance I find myself presently astride on the summit of a gaily caparisoned mule, the hardness of whose mouth is equalled only by that of his saddle. The track mounts rapidly round the slopes of Monte Rosso, among glades of oak and chestnut, ferns, copper beeches, and white birch, and vines running riot in the midst of slaggy lava beds, streaked here and there bright yellow with iron and sal ammoniac. In half an hour I am at the edge of an actual running stream of fiery matter, which has been steadily flowing for the last fortnight, and has now just touched with its ruddy finger-tips the poor doomed vineyards at the foot of Monte San Lio.

There are experiences in the life of a vagabond which can never repeat themselves; the moment in which he first smelt a durian, or put his trembling lips to a turtle's egg, or stood for the first time face to face with some scene in nature that from boyhood has been an object of wonder and fascination; the moment in which he first floated placidly past the terrors of the maelstrom, or drank in the somewhat fraudulent beauty of the Southern Cross, or watched the gyrations of a waterspout, or caught the glitter of a far-off glacier. Such a moment is that in which my mule now comes to a halt almost at the brink of a molten mass of rubbishy-looking liquid that is running at a rate of twenty-five yards an hour at a temperature of two thousand degrees Fahrenheit. Beautiful it is not, but terrible it undoubtedly is, as with an angry kind of growl it laps into and submerges a broad bouldered water-course, and with lank fingers outspread goes slowly on its inexorable downward path. Desolation and death wait upon its touch, a desolation that for ages to come must reign supreme, but which one day, if the earth last so long, will give place again to beauty and fertility. For it will be here

as it has been on that smiling tract that lies round the lower slopes of Vesuvius. As the years go by, the surface of that fierce mass will cool slowly and surely through the subtle agency of radiation and atmospheric influences; gases will arise, metallic substances be deposited, various salts will crystallise in the cracks and crevices, and fashion themselves in beautiful stalactites within the recesses of the lava caves. By little and little the work of disintegration and decomposition will go on through the mysterious action of air and water. The carbonic acid of the atmosphere, aided by a constant supply of gaseous agents and the perpetual decay of surrounding vegetation, will operate irresistibly in breaking the chemical bonds of union among the elements of which it is composed. The iron oxide will become a hydrate, the alkalis will be separated, the entire mass of now seething rock will be reduced to the most fertile soil on the face of the globe.

Who can say what are the constituent parts of this fierce muddy torrent which geologists tell us is projected out of the bowels of the earth from a depth of one-and-twenty miles? It has been analysed again and again, but, after all, the question comes back like an echo, in an age that is very fond of asking questions that it cannot answer, What is it, and Whence does it come?

From many different points of view the theory of volcanic energy has been approached, but who shall say the truth has been reached? Our forefathers were for ages content with the belief, familiar to every schoolboy who has read the "Prometheus Vincens," of the thunder-stricken Typhon stretched helpless and hopeless beneath the load of Etna; a far more picturesque explanation than the matter-of-fact fires of sulphur and bitumen that in the Middle Ages supplanted the grand old legend. All I know is that standing here—on uncomfortably warm soles—by the fiery demon as he curls and twists from his mountain fastness, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he trails his slow length along in obedience to the inexorable pressure of some secret elastic agency. Rising now in sudden jets, now sinking in sullen overflow, subject ever, as it seems, to a certain periodical pumping process—I know not what else to call it—the stream gives me the impression, as at Stromboli, of being compelled to yield to some process governed by a natural law of ener-

getic growth followed by recurrent periods of exhausted effort.

A little distance from San Lio, in the Immacolatella, the memorable spot where, in 1886—or so people say—the lava torrent, which had been slipping along at a speed of three feet a minute, was suddenly checked by the clergy, with the Archbishop of Catania at their head, who, carrying in procession the holy veil of Sant' Agata, averted the certain destruction that was threatening Nicolosi. "Three days later the lava reached the Altarelli, but divided at the eminence, and gradually slackened its speed. Another stream, however, on the east side of Monte Rosso, made straight for Nicolosi. At midday on the thirty-first of May, the prefect ordered the village to be evacuated, and guarded the approach to it with soldiers. On the third of June the lava ceased flowing, within three hundred and seventy yards of the first houses, and next day the eruption ended with another earthquake." That one lava flow devastated a thousand hectares of cultivated land, and did damage to the amount of five million lire.

Three hours' weary jogging along an ever-mounting track, with my mule at every six paces either on his nose or his haunches, brings me to several houses entirely isolated by impassable lava, and through groves of blasted chestnut-trees, which a few hours ago were flourishing in noble luxuriance, to the margin of a green plateau, known locally as the "Frutteto," at the foot of Monte Rinazzi. Here the scene is one which I am utterly unable to give any idea of, so strange is the mingling of smiling fruitfulness and pitiful desolation, as the lava, like a hundred-headed serpent in its death-throes, writhes and twists about between two broad wings of untouched cherry and almond-trees, while overhead the sapphire sky is cut by the wooded crests of Sona, and Grosso, and Zaccinello, that stand like sentinels over the Bosca Ferrandina, the property of the Conte Alvarey de Toledo, studded a week ago with lordly oaks and magnificent chestnuts, but now, together with the neighbouring municipal forest, utterly and for ever burnt up and blotted out.

It was now noon, and fairly exhausted by heat and the excruciating nodosities of my saddle, I hailed with rapture the welcome shelter of the Casa di Bosco, where I had leisure to indulge the inner man with warm sandwiches and such oranges as can be eaten only in Sicily.

Thus refreshed, I pushed forward in the lengthening shadows towards my sleeping quarters. The way stretched upwards through a throng of small extinct craters, with here and there a clump of pines. Step by step vegetation grew scantier; there were a few patches now and again of forlorn beeches, but the soil is so constantly shifting that but little flora can flourish. With each hundred yards of ascent there was less and less, until at seven thousand feet I was well within the sterile domain of King Lava, in what is aptly called "regione deserta," a gloomy, silent waste of carbonised trees, ropy lava rivulets, and cake-like beds, with not a trace of life, either animal or vegetable. Three hundred years ago these giant slopes were clothed from crown to base with superb plane and chestnut woods, but by his own act and deed Enceladus has stripped himself of nine-tenths of his covering, and lies for the most part naked and open to all the winds of heaven.

Under the chilly shadows of Monte Capriolo, nine thousand feet above Catania, I dine like a lord on a fatty mixture of water, bread, and greenstuffs, known hereabouts as "zupp' alla santà"—health broth—with sardines for an "antepasto," and a copious draught of genuine "vino d'Etna" from a handy spring; and having dismissed my mule to the lower regions, I am soundly asleep before the clatter of his departing feet has died in the distance. My couch was uncanny and uncomfortable, and it was with a grumble that I woke at two o'clock in the morning nipped with cold, and after a "nip" of a warmer sort—for Gigi, my guide, is no more a teetotaler than I am—I make a start for the top by the light of the westerling moon. There are yet eighteen hundred feet to be climbed—eighteen hundred feet that look nothing from where I stand, but are, in reality, a steep and unstable via dolorosa of backsliding volcanic sand and scoræ, along the brink of blood-curdling precipices, giving me an excuse now and then to halt and watch the weird effect of the volumes of black smoke that roll heavily along through the purple night, lightened ever and anon by a sudden, swift flash of fire from the great heart of Etna. The spectacle on the upper side of the Observatory, as I rest upon a warm little hill of scoraceous blocks, is such as neither the most imaginative of poets nor the most daring of artists could conceive. Two cascades of molten lava,

apparently of the consistency of the slaggy product of a copper furnace, glow dully through the gloaming from their cradle of fire; now surging upwards in fantastic knolls and heapy ridges, now diving into the nooks of the crannied rock, an ever restless, cruel, seething flood. From the lips of a newly-formed crater not two hundred yards away, tongues of violet-red flame leap upwards, mingling with the light of the breaking dawn and the volumes of smoke which wreath the whole summit, and through which I catch a glimpse of the head of Monte Nero away to the south, touched by the first golden gleams of day. Doubt has been often expressed as to the reality of the flames that appear to issue from a volcano. It is quite possible that they are rare, and that in many instances the glare is but an emanation from incandescent and not flaming bodies. But there is no mistake about the reality of these fires that I am now looking at, while far overhead darting flashes of cloud lightning stab and rive the dense volumes of vapour; the air is heavy with dinning explosions—"boati" the Italians call them—and a sudden shower of sand, and scoræ, and burning pebbles, belched forth from the nearest of three vigorous young craters, falls in such unpleasant contiguity that I am glad to beat a hasty retreat with no worse damage than a smashed alpenstock. I have come a long way by a hard road to see the sight and to tell others about it, but now that I stand face to face with it all, deafened, blinded, and bewildered, I realise my powerlessness to sketch even in faintest outline the colossal sublimity of the spectacle.

The central cone of Etna, which is not the actual summit of the mountain, has undergone frequent changes in form and elevation as the result of eruptions. I need not say that when undergoing such phenomenal disturbance as the one I am describing, it is impossible for any living being, who is not emulous of the fate of Empedocles, to do more than approach within a short distance of it. The highest point is given as ten thousand eight hundred and thirty-five feet, more than twice the height of Vesuvius, and should be a magnificent spot from which to see the sun rise out of the sea, and to watch the phenomenon of the purple shadow which at dawn the mountain casts over the whole western part of the island. In my case there is every probability of my going to my grave without having seen the sight,

for though the small hours promised fair, when the time came, the wind, which was high and cold, had shifted, and a farther ascent was impossible on account of the suffocating smoke. But as the morning wore on, even from my lower resting-place the panorama was a superb one, spreading round me for a distance of three hundred miles from point to point. The faithful but inexact Gigi pointed to a thin strip of haze that he assured me was the coast of Africa, but I inwardly wrote it down as Malta; on the north was a curl of faint smoke from the Liparis, and all the fair Calabrian coast stretching far, and the Punta del Faro beyond Messina, and all Sicily to the west lying like an open map, to where the eye caught the sharp barriers of the Conca d' Oro round Palermo. Truly a wonderful and an entrancing scene is it that lies round this mountain; a land of corn, and wine, and oil, where life is for the happy-hearted a long toy-symphony, but a land whose smiling face has been scarred again and again by the insurgent demons of flame, and whose soil has been made fat by the stricken bodies of her children; a land whose sons to-day may have better knowledge than their sires how to foretell or how to interpret the recurring agonies of Mother Earth, but are as powerless to guard against them as was the Pelasgian or the Phœnician who tempted Scylla when the world was young.

## FATE.

FAR across the broad leagues heaving, 'twixt old England and her home,  
Like a bird the sunshine seeking, to the southern lands she'd come;  
From his quaint old palace lying in the great Sierra's shade,  
Careless of the fate that drew him to the fair pale northern maid,  
The haughty Spaniard came to woo her, and the sweet blue Saxon eyes  
Sank beneath the glances fired by the glow of Seville skies;

Where the Daphne buds were growing,  
And the soft west winds were blowing,  
There they stood, and hands and lips met in youth's frank faith together,  
There their faith and troth they plighted, in the blue Biscayan weather.

Home she went, where English dawns crept about the world of boughs,  
Where, all grey, and still, and stately, stood the old time-honoured house;  
Home he went, where crimson sunsets dyed the mountain's snowy crest,  
And the Vega glowed beneath them as the hot hours sank to rest;

While the Daphne buds were growing,  
And the soft west winds were blowing,  
And fate with her cold, sneering smile drew ever more apart  
The links that fearless youth had sworn should bind each restless heart.

An April day in England saw a bridal party pass,  
To reach the church's hoary porch, across the dewy grass;  
'An April day in Seville heard the great cathedral chimed  
Ring o'er the giant orange-trees, and through the flowering limes.  
The bride looked up with blush and smile to her Yorkshire bridegroom's face—  
The bridegroom o'er Madrid's fair child bent in his stately grace—  
Daphne buds again were growing,  
Soft west winds again were blowing;  
Those scents and sounds for ever, though those two no more may meet,  
Will make one proud lip quiver, will make one hushed heart beat.

## MY FRIEND'S CONTRIBUTOR.

## A COMPLETE STORY.

It is strange to me now to remember how melancholy I was in my early youth. I think I must have made a luxury of grief. I know at least that I resented any suggestion of the possibility of cheerfulness. My friends would not, indeed, take me at my own valuation; but, then, one's friends never do. It is one of the blessed privileges of friendship to be told that one doesn't know one's own affairs or understand one's own feelings. But that didn't make any difference. I bore hidden in my heart all the sorrows that I hadn't felt—and these were many.

By-and-by things changed. The troubles I had only imagined bore down on me in grim reality, and threatened to overwhelm me. The first real shock that was dealt me was my love affair with Miss France. She didn't turn out what I had expected in any way. I thought—to begin with—that she would be sweet, sympathetic, tender, and melancholy. I had judged so from her contribution to the "Meltown Gazette." I myself lived in Meltown in those days, and I believed—when I read her poetry—that I had found a kindred spirit. I knew nothing of literary people and their ways, and I took their statements very literally. In fact, I did so again, long afterwards—as I am about to tell you—when I ought to have learnt better. Some persons never will become wiser by experience. I am, apparently, one of those persons; but I cannot regret the result of the last mistake that I have made in this direction.

The first mistake was a severe blow to me. Miss France—the author of the melancholy poetry—turned out to be young, pretty, sprightly, and good-tempered. These things did not, in spite

of my original disappointment about the kindred spirit I thought I had discovered, prevent me from falling in love with her. I might—even in those early days—have forgiven her for her airy, happy views of life if she had consented to take me seriously, and not laughed when I proposed to her. She did laugh, however, and, as I thought at the time, broke my heart completely.

I never expected to get over that trouble. If life had been a howling wilderness before she disappointed me, what was it likely to prove afterwards? I fled from the scene of my trial; but it was only to carry my woes to another part of the country. This shock I knew that I should never get over. And it was followed by others of various sorts—pecuniary shocks, domestic shocks, legal shocks. Enemies attacked me; friends deserted me; speculations went wrong; property deteriorated; somebody slandered me; somebody else accused me of slandering him, and I had to pay damages. Old acquaintances quarrelled with me; new acquaintances snubbed me; my favourite sister married a man I hated; the aunt I couldn't endure insisted on keeping house for me; my chosen companion turned out a scamp and was sent to penal servitude; my own character was damaged by his misdoings. I had five bad accidents in succession; in a sixth my uncle Joseph was drowned before my eyes. He left me nothing but the privilege of paying for his funeral. In fact, the arrows and slings of outrageous fortune assailed me on every side, until I began to feel at home with trouble, and disposed to sing with the poet,

Oh, sorrow, wilt thou live with me,  
No casual mistress, but a wife?

All the same, I felt sometimes indignant with that poet for monopolising more than his share of the sympathy of the nineteenth century. His troubles were by no means equal to mine. "You lost a particular friend unexpectedly," I felt inclined to say to him; "well and good; so did I. But did yours owe you any money? Mine did."

Years rolled on. I have never happened to meet any rolling myself; but I know, from the evidence of many respectable people, that it's a habit years have; no doubt they mean no harm by it.

They left me older than before—a nasty trick that they have played on other people as well as me—but at last, when I was well on in the thirties, there came a pause in my misfortunes. Fortune had, I suppose, emptied her quiver for the moment,

or was, perhaps, weary of turning me into a perpetual target. She took a short holiday, and I had time to feel myself all over, and to consider whether I was much hurt.

I ought, of course, to have been shattered; but I wasn't. I had gone through enough to justify me in becoming a mere wreck of my former self; but I hadn't made the most of my opportunities. I found myself, in fact, more cheerful than in the days before Fortune the outrageous riddled me through and through with her miscellaneous shot. I couldn't understand how it was at first; until I began to realise that it was better to have your troubles outside than inside you. Sorrow, the physician, had applied to me so many blisters and irritating plasters that my diseases had been worked out, and I felt myself quite cheerful, and inclined to make the best of things.

I wondered why I had never married. The affair with Miss France was not enough to account for it. My feelings about her had long worn themselves out. I thought now that a well-chosen wife would be a pleasant companion, a satisfactory housekeeper, a nurse ready for sickness and old age.

Miss France—now Mrs. Scholes—was, I knew, at liberty again. She had been a widow for some years. But my thoughts did not turn to her readily. I felt that she had gone through too much. I wanted some one who was cheerful—like myself—and inclined to be optimistic and hopeful. Miss France had been a very lively girl, but that was long ago, and Tom Scholes had led her a sad life since then. He had served her up sorrow for breakfast, dinner, and supper, until she must have swallowed many a bushel of it. I had got copies of her poems—poems that she wrote before her marriage, when she didn't know what trouble meant, except from hearsay; and I began to think, after a time, that she had made a mistake in writing them. There wasn't a sorrow that she'd described in verse that her husband didn't take her through. There seemed a fate in it, as if he'd seen them all in a magic mirror beforehand; yet she had written them with a light enough heart, and without any forebodings. I got in the habit of ticking off one of her poems whenever news of some fresh villainy on Tom's part came to me. I felt a morbid sympathy with her, and used to count the verses that were left in a sort of terror.

Tom didn't hurry her through her troubles; he took her downhill slowly, with time to feel everything by the way; he was considerate as regards that, very considerate. It was as if he had said, "Take your time, my dear—sure you realise it!" and then, when she was getting over it nicely he gave her another blow, rather bigger than the one she had before. He was an ingenious fellow, was Tom. I had always known that.

It was a relief to me that she did not write any more poems after her marriage. I supposed that she did not dare to add to the list. At last Tom died, as he had lived; that is to say, he got himself killed in a manner most likely to shock and disturb her. One couldn't suppose he did it on purpose, because it must have been so unpleasant to himself, but the habit of being a torment to his wife got somehow in his way, to his own disadvantage at the end.

I was sorry for Mrs. Scholes. I pictured her as a mournful widow clad in sombre weeds, with a low, complaining voice and shattered health. I felt sure that a black-bordered handkerchief was always at hand with its suggestion of woe. I didn't like suggestions of woe, and I determined not to seek her out.

This was wise of me. I knew now that I wanted as a companion somebody cheerful, ignorant of evil, believing in goodness and happiness because she knew of nothing else. I was convinced that there were such women in the world. Indeed, I had read a story by one of them in the last Christmas number of the "Meltown Gazette."

I was well aware that I had made a mistake once before when I interpreted character by literary productions—in the case of Miss France herself—but this very mistake assured me of the correctness of my deductions now. If the poetess who had written the saddest of verses had turned out to be sprightly and happy, what must this woman be whose every word breathed of love, peace, and innocent joy? Her story was idyllic, a setting of sweet emotion in happy circumstances. Sin was with her an unknown quantity; wrong and sorrow were unguessed-at realities.

Tom Scholes had at one time held the office of editor of the "Gazette," but that had fallen out of his fingers like everything else, and one of my old friends had taken it up. He had persuaded me to invest money in it—I have met a good many

friends of that sort in my time—and so far I hadn't had any returns. Perhaps that was why he sent the Christmas number to my address, which he seemed to have forgotten for other purposes; or it might be that he wanted me to see how the paper was improving in literary tone. Anyhow, the attention had been unexpected.

"Bob must know the girl who wrote that story," I said to myself. "I'll get him to introduce me."

My thoughts went back to a memorable picnic, when I had hoped for another introduction to another authoress. But I wasn't warned by the recollection. I wrote to Bob, and he promised to arrange the thing, but he did not tell me the name of his contributor. He invited me to stay with him, and said he would give a dinner at which I should meet her.

I had not visited Meltown since I fled from it as the disappointed suitor of Miss France. I thought the town seemed black and ugly as I entered it, but Bob's house was comfortable enough. The dinner-party was appointed for the next day. Bob refused to tell me a word about the lady beforehand.

When I entered the room on the momentous occasion she was already there. There were other women in the room, but nobody else seemed of any consequence. Two or three men were grouped round the authoress, and they laughed delightedly as she said things to them in a low, sweet voice.

What was there about her that was familiar to me? She was a mature woman, and not the girl I had expected to see. She was charmingly dressed; she had beautiful arms and a splendid head of hair. Bob spoke my name in introducing me, but he did not mention hers. She bowed her head in acknowledgement, and went on talking to the gentlemen behind her. It was only when she rose from her low chair—I was to take her in to dinner—that she turned her eyes full upon me and smiled.

"I think we have met before," she said.

It was Miss France herself, the authoress of all the miserable poems, and poor Tom's widow.

"You see, it was to be," I said to her later. "However you disguise yourself in print, what you write brings me to your feet. It did so before. It has done so now. It is a case of Kismet, and you had better yield."

"I am not what you expected," she replied.

"You are far better. But how could you, having known so much sorrow, write so deliciously of happiness and love?"

"Do we not write most readily of what we have not? Does not our imagination fly for relief to that?" she asked. "With great writers it may not be so, but with very little ones, like me, I think it is. When I did not know what trouble was, I seemed to revel in descriptions of it."

"I should like to see you revel that way again," I answered. "Marry me, and I will give you the chance."

She did marry me; but she has not revelled. She still writes of love and happiness; but she tells me that all her pictures now are drawn from real experience. I find it pleasantest to believe her.

### SOME ITALIAN GOURMETS.

WITH the civilisation that perished among the ashes of Rome, in the fifth century, passed away for a time that fine gastronomic art which had been its outcome. The rich odours of the feasts of Grimalcio, of Lucullus, of Domitian, of Elagabalus, which had stimulated the appetites of the warriors of the North, of Alaric the Goth, and Attila the Hun, were blown afar by the cold winds that came down from their remote forests and mountains. And when the world was without cookery and cooks it was, as Carême put it, without Literature, without Intellectual Movement, without the Social Idea.

Happily, some wafts of these fugitive odours found their way into the monastic cloisters. As in the scriptorium the monk preserved the art of writing, so in his refectory—says Dumas—he preserved the art of dining. In an eloquent passage in his "*Moines de l'Occident*," Montalembert expatiated on the enormous debt which society owes to the monastic fraternities, who relighted the torch of civilisation, cherished the flickering flame until it grew strong and full, and handed it down from generation to generation. Let it not be forgotten that they revived the vital forces of the cuisine. This is no insignificant part of the debt.

It was natural enough that the Italian cities should be the first to feel the impulses of art and letters; and it was

natural also that Venice, Genoa, Milan, Florence, and Pisa, with their opulence and their love of things gracious and becoming, should be the first to imitate and to surpass the culinary sumptuousness of Imperial Rome. But in Rome itself—in Papal Rome—the luxuries of Hortensius and Lucullus, of Tiberius and Domitian, were continued by a long succession of Popes and Cardinals and ecclesiastical dignitaries. The great Italian artists consecrated them by the magic of genius. Who could despise the gastronomic pleasures which they shared with Titian and Tintoretto, with Paolo Veronese and Raffaella, with Baccio Bondinelli and Guido René?

We may infer from his controversy with "John the Faster," that Pope Gregory the Great was not insensible to the modest satisfactions of the dinner-table, nor ignorant of their hygienic properties. When Charles the Great paid his first visit to Rome, he was nobly feasted by Pope Adrian the First, and again, when crowned Emperor of the West, by Leo the Third. John the Twelfth was a voluptuary who did not eat to live, but lived to eat. He did not dine, he simply indulged his grosser appetites. Casting off all the decencies of his priestly character, he drank wine "to the love of the devil," and gave luxurious dinners at which the principal guests were courtesans and buffoons. The famous Hildebrand—Gregory the Seventh, one of the greatest of the Roman pontiffs—kept a noble though always a temperate and well-ordered table, at which, in 1077, he entertained the Emperor Henry the Third, after his submission to the Church at Canossa. Pope Benedict the Twelfth—I have leaped over nearly two centuries—had many merits; but his enemies attributed to him an excessive love of a good dinner, and of its concomitant, good wine. Indeed, the phrase "*bibamus papaliter*"—let us drink like a pope—alludes to Benedict's partiality to the wine-cup. Petrarch gives a bad character of this successor of the Apostles; he calls him ill names, "*potorem illum et senio et sopore et mero gravidum*," and "*vino madidus, ævo gravis, ac soporifero rari perfusus*." And he tells us that, having received a present of eels from the Lake of Bolsena, the Pope distributed all but a few among the Cardinals, and that afterwards, when they warmly praised the quality of the fish, he said discontentedly: "Had I tasted them first, and known how good they were,

I should not have given them away so freely; but I never thought that such fish could be bred in Italy." Fiamma—but as he was a Dominican he may have been prejudiced against the Pope, who was originally a Cistercian—condemns him as a very great eater and an egregious toper, which no one who wisely understands the art of dining will ever be!

There was more splendour and less grossness about the dinners of Pope Clement the Sixth, who, at Avignon, maintained a luxurious pomp, and encouraged his Cardinals to imitate his sumptuous example; so that his Court was probably "the gayest and most festive in Europe." He loved to have handsome and elegant young men about him, who appreciated his cook's performances, and brightened the feast by their witty—and I fear not too decent—chatter. When Rienzi, who has been idealised as the last of the Roman Tribunes, visited Avignon, partly in the character of a prisoner, one can fancy that it was his repute as a "bon vivant" which had attracted Pope Clement's curiosity. And here I may say a few words about Rienzi, who, during his brief spell of favour, gave two or three memorable dinners. As, for instance, on that historical occasion when, in the Church of the Lateran, having proclaimed the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire "to Rome and Rome's people, and the whole of Italy," he proceeded to his palace and entertained his numerous guests at a gorgeous banquet. Nor did he forget the Roman citizens, for whom countless tables were spread in the courts and chambers of the Lateran, while streams of red wine flowed from the nostrils of the Brazen Horse of Constantine. And on that other occasion, when, having invited his most strenuous opponents—the heads of the great patrician houses of Colonna, Ursini, Savalli, Frangipani—to a gorgeous banquet at the Capitol, he ordered their immediate arrest on a charge of having plotted his assassination, and held them during the night, each in a separate chamber, strongly guarded. With the first rays of morning came a confessor and the fatal peals of the death-bell. The great hall of the Capitol was draped with blood-red curtains, relieved by rugs of white. The Tribune, with a gloomy and frowning countenance, sat in his chair of state. Before him stood the executioners with drawn swords. Not a single detail was omitted that could enhance the

solemn horror of the scene. Then, when the prisoners silently and hopelessly awaited the doom of death, Rienzi suddenly announced to them that they were pardoned, and that they might trust in his friendship. To the splendid dinner which followed upon this farcical ending of a tragical drama, I fear they would do scant justice in their great revulsion of feeling.

When Rienzi, after his captivity at Avignon, returned to Rome with the title of Senator, he displayed an extraordinary propensity for excess in eating and drinking. His dinners degenerated into orgies of gluttony; he was continually cramming himself with comfits and sweetmeats; at all hours the wine-cup was at his elbow. It was pitiful to see this whilom heroic figure degraded into a swollen and corpulent toper, with a belly "like a tun," and his face covered with carbuncles.

Pope Urban the Sixth offered a striking contrast to Clement the Seventh in his manner of living. A single dish satisfied him at dinner; and he provoked the anger of the Cardinals by threatening to reduce their bills of fare to an equal simplicity. It is to the honour of Nicholas the Fifth that he observed the same golden law of moderation. He was a man of cultivated tastes, and loved the company of scholars and men of letters; though such guests were rare enough at the Vatican. Nor did he neglect the artists—Fra Angelico enjoying his special favour. In 1452 the Emperor Frederick visited Rome. Pope Nicholas received him with all the pomp and splendour an Emperor could expect or desire, and lodged him in the Palace of the Lateran.

The crusade proclaimed during his pontificate was enthusiastically taken up by Philip Duke of Burgundy—one of the most splendid Princes of his time—the Prince with whom Comines has made us so familiar. At a magnificent dinner which he gave at Lille—a banquet which astonished his contemporaries by its profuseness—a beautiful woman, personating "Ecclesia," or the Church, was seated on an elephant, and being led by a giant into the banqueting-hall, there and then delivered a poetical address, invoking assistance against the Paynim. Immediately afterwards the herald of the Golden Fleece set upon the board a live pheasant, glittering with jewels. To him the Duke delivered a paper containing a vow "to God, the Blessed Virgin, the ladies, and



the pheasant"—surely a curious combination!—that he would hasten to the relief of the Church. And the vow was repeated by his son Charles, Count of Charalois, by the Duke of Cleves, and by all his chivalry.

Plus the Second—Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, famous for his literary culture and diplomatic capacity, his eloquence, and many accomplishments—maintained the gracious and refined hospitality which might have been expected from a man of his calibre; but he loved best to dispense it at his country residence, where he could separate himself for a while from the trappings of pontifical state. More sumptuous was the table kept by the handsome Venetian, Peter Barbo, who, on being elected Pope, assumed the name of Paul the Second; though, in allusion to his personal comeliness, he would have preferred that of Formosus. He was fond of display and show, and his meals were served with an infinity of ceremonial. It is to be feared he ate not wisely but too well, his sudden death being attributed to a fit of indigestion, consequent upon his devouring at dinner "two hares—and those very large ones"—"*duos lepores, et quidem prægrandes comederat.*" There may be deaths more terrible and shameful, but hardly any more vulgar than those which result from gluttony.

It is needless for me to dwell on the "sumptuousness" of the banquets of Sixtus the Fourth, the first Pope who ruled rather as a temporal prince than as priest and pontiff, and treated the Papacy as "a great secular power to which the spiritual character was merely attached as an accident." His profligacy was the scandal of the age, and helped on, by the disgust it excited, that movement for the purification of the Church which culminated in the Lutheran reformation. As much may be said of the excesses of Pope Innocent the Eighth, and certainly not less of the Borgia, Pope Alexander the Sixth, notorious in himself and as the father of the infamous Cæsar Borgia and the beautiful and frail Lucrezia. The vices of this Pope are an historical commonplace. The Borgias, from the Pope downwards, were skilled in poisons, and it was dangerous for any who had excited their cupidity or provoked their revenge to dine at their tables. Death, not immediate, perhaps, but inevitable, lurked in the daintiest dishes and the rarest wines. On August the twelfth, 1503, the Pope dined

at his vineyard near the Vatican palace with his son Cæsar and Cardinal Adrian, Bishop of Hereford. All three were taken with a sudden illness, and the story runs that the Pope and his son, through a servant's mistake, drank of poisoned wine intended only for the Cardinal, whose wealth had excited the cupidity of the Borgias. Another version asserts that Adrian, suspecting treachery, bribed the Pope's cook, who thereupon served up a poisoned dish of confections to Alexander. That all three were ill seems certain. Adrian suffered for a long period, during which the whole skin of his body, it is said, was changed. Cæsar recovered, through the immediate use of antidotes, assisted by his youth and robust constitution, but the Pope, a man of seventy-two, died in less than a week.

The next Pope, Julius the Second, was an excellent judge of wine, and exercised his critical faculty much too often. His successor, Leo the Tenth, gave admirable dinners. Previous to his pontificate, he had resided in Rome, and his palace had been the favourite resort of artists, men of letters, musicians, travellers, whom he entertained so liberally that his expenses often exceeded his resources, and on one occasion he was reduced to pledge his silver plate before he could procure the materials for an intended banquet. His hospitality was not less splendid as Pope than as Cardinal, and his table was crowded with all the luxuries of the cuisine. He munificently rewarded novelties in the culinary art; welcomed experiments on the flesh of monkeys and crows, and other unusual dishes; and hailed with intense satisfaction the discovery of peacock sausages. But he was of too cultivated an intelligence to confine himself to these physical gratifications. He sought the brilliant company of men of wit and humour; nor did he disdain that of indifferent poets, whose little vanities and absurd pretensions were a constant source of amusement. His favourite companions were gay, well-born, and clever young Cardinals. Card-playing for heavy stakes usually wound up the papal banquet; and Leo, whether he lost or won, was wont to fling a largesse of gold pieces among the spectators of the game.

At Bologna, in December, 1514, he received Francis the First, the brilliant sovereign of France, and propitiated him with entertainments so costly and magnificent that they greatly assisted his diplo-

macy. He knew that men are never so pliable as when they have greatly dined.

Let me glance a moment at Italian poets and men of letters in connection with my subject.

The austere temper of Dante found no enjoyment in gastronomic luxuries; and places on the sixth terrace or crevice of the Purgatorial Mountain the souls of gluttons and gourmets to drink "the sweet wormwood of their torments," and through the pains of hunger cleanse themselves of their sin. Among them Dante names the Luccese poet, Buonagianta; Simon of Tours, Pope Martin the Fourth, who, in his lifetime, had fed grossly upon "Bolsena's eels and cups of muscadell"; Boniface, Archbishop of Ravenna; and the Marchese de' Riglogiosi, of Forlì, who, when his butler told him the common report in the city that he did nothing but drink, answered, "And do you tell them that I am always thirsty."

Petrarca was less severe than the poet of the "Divina Commedia," and though blamelessly temperate, did not despise the more innocent pleasures of life—viands well-dressed and wines good and old. But he did not throw himself into their enjoyment with the zest and vigour of Boccaccio, which appear so plainly in the brighter pages of the "Decamerone," just as Pulci's relish for them may be traced in his "Morgante Maggiore," and Boiardo's in the "Orlando Innamorato." To Sannazzaro we owe the "Piscatory Eclogues." Bembo, almost equally distinguished as ecclesiastic, poet, and historian, was an accomplished diner-out. Then we know that Ariosto was acquainted with the elements of a good dinner, and understood how to enjoy that gift of the gods in moderation. Bembo was one of his friends; Leo the Tenth one of his patrons. He sat at the table of both; and I have no manner of doubt that each host was proud of his guest. "To judge rightly of Ariosto," says Ginguiné, "the reader must figure to himself the Court of Ferrara, one of the most frequented and most polished that could be found in Italy during the sixteenth century. He must consider it as forming every evening a brilliant circle, of which Cardinal Ippolito and Alfonso d' Este were the centre. In this noble and festive assembly he must imagine the bard to be riveting the attention of all eyes and ears during an hour or more for forty-six evenings." This was a "symposium" of a novel and delightful character. Oh, the pleasure of it! A choice and well-served

dinner, and then an hour of beautiful poetry read by the poet himself—and poetry fresh and newly coined—direct from the mint, as it were, with all its gloss upon it! I think I should prefer it—if one had the poet—to the accomplishments of the Society Clown or the Whistling Lady.

There existed in Florence, in the opening years of the sixteenth century, a learned and convivial society called the *Accademia de' Vignaiuoli*, or "Club of the Vine-Dressers," the members of which, according to the strange affectation of the time, assumed names bearing some reference to the plant blessed by Bacchus; such as *Il Mosta*, or *Must*; *L'Agresto*, or *Sour Grape*; *Il Cotogno*, or *Quince*. They met periodically at the house of Uberto Strozzi, where they dined moderately, and over the wine and olives improvised verses on all manner of subjects which were not worse than impromptus generally are. Among these boon companions were *Firenzuola Molza*, *Della Casa*, and *Berni*—*Francesco Berni de Bibbiesca*, the great master of Italian humorous poetry. *Berni* was a bon vivant, and in later life enjoyed the good cheer supplied alternately by Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici and Duke Alessandro. In his exquisite burlesque of the "*Orlando Innamorato*," his love of "the gifts of a bountiful Providence" is sufficiently conspicuous, and he depicts himself as a man who liked to take life easily, on the "eat, drink, for to-morrow we die" principle.

Nor music, hunting-match, nor mirthful measure,  
Nor play, nor other pastime, moved him aught;  
And if 'twas true that horses gave him pleasure,  
The simple sight of them was all he sought.  
Too poor to purchase; and his only treasure  
His naked bed; his pastime to do naught  
But tumble there, and stretch his weary length,  
And so recruit his spirits and his strength.

This bed was six yards across, with sheets and curtains bleached by wear and breeze, a silken quilt, bolsters and pillows fair—four of them, one at each corner. By chance, one day, a Frenchman—a renowned cook—was introduced; for him a similar bed was prepared, and in the space between the two a fair table was placed, and

Upon this table, for the pair to dine,  
Were savoury viands piled, prepared with art;  
All ordered by this master-cook divine.  
Boiled, roast, ragouts and jellies, paste and tart;  
But soups and syrups pleased the Florentine,  
Who loathed fatigue like death, and, for his part,  
Brought neither teeth nor fingers into play,  
But made two varlets feed him as he lay.

But from *Berni*, with just this brief

taste of his quality, I must hurry on to Redi, passing over Alessandro Tassoni, whom I judge, however, to have belonged to the goodly company of *bons vivants* from his flattering allusion—in "*La Secchia Rapita*"—to Bruno, "whose fertile thought" the "long small sausage" of Modena "to perfection brought." Francesco Redi was one of the most "moderate" men of his day, and never drank wine without diluting it; yet in his dithyramb of "*Bacco in Toscana*," he has sung the praises of wine with a fertility, a graphic vigour, and a warmth which have never been surpassed.

The poem will be known to English readers by Leigh Hunt's admirable translation. After passing in review the various kinds of Tuscan wines—denouncing beer and water, and recommending ice to cool the cup—he ends by pronouncing Montepulciano "the king of all."

Hearken, all earth !  
We, Bacchus, in the might of our great mirth,  
To all who reverence us, and are right thinkers.  
Hear, all ye drinkers !  
Give ear, and give faith, to our edict divine—  
Montepulciano's the king of all wine.

## ON KALI'S SHOULDER.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

By JOHN AYSCOUGH.

### CHAPTER IV.

"WHERE'S the Baronet? Any one seen him since tiffin?"

Apparently no one had. I wanted him about a company matter, and was not best pleased at having to run over half the cantonment to find him.

Coming out of the mess I met Snelgrove and Farmer-Copear. No, they had not seen him.

"He's off to that confounded palace, I expect."

"Or the hills," suggested the doctor. He led me aside and said: "How about going after him? I've thought a good deal about those sketches. I should like to see where they lead to; are you on? It would be a bit of an expedition, and we might find out something further."

Snelgrove thought he'd come, too, and off we went, driving as far as the bridge in my cart, and then taking to our feet and the mountain path up Kali's Shoulder.

"When I was at Eton," said Snelgrove, whose reminiscences were rather apt to open thus, "I used to regret occasionally not having been an ancient—it was very

easy getting to heaven by that route. The gods set one such a jolly example. But what I wish to say is that, by all I can hear, this Kali, whose shoulder we are about to prospect, could have given all the lot of them points. She was a real bad 'un."

"Yes, but her amorousities were nothing to her badness in other ways. The Thugs were her devoted clients."

"She seems," pursued Snelgrove, whose mind was painfully modern and Anglo-Saxon, "to have been well known to the police; she'd a lot of aliases, I fancy."

"Yes; *Párwatí*, *Parbúttý*, *Dévi*, *Kali*, and so on. She has more temples than all the three hundred million other gods together."

"Cox," interposed the doctor, "read that."

And he handed me some sheets of paper on which was written, in his own handwriting, what proved to be a lengthy translated extract from the "*Bride of Siva*."

"Aloud?"

"If you like."

So I read, as we climbed higher and higher up the hill-path, with the shadow of the mountain lying over us and falling far down beneath us towards the plain.

"It fell on a day that the god *Siva* slept, and while he slumbered the Lady *Párwatí* came walking through the Ghauts, laughing as she went. And she thought of *Ganesh*, her son, whose four hands hold the corners of the world, whose head is an elephant's, and who is a most wise god, watching the portals of the earth. And she laughed to think how she had gotten him by her own desire, and how the Lord *Siva* had been angered seeing him. For the Destroyer had stamped in his fury so that the *Kootab* waved to and fro like a reed when the Wind-God breathes upon it by Holy *Jumna*; and *Kinchin Jingl* shook his head and his white hair fell down Himalyan to the valleys.

"But loudest of all laughed *Kali*, to think how she had wept, and how *Siva* had ceased in his anger at sight of her tears, and had become gentle. 'The tears of a woman are like fire,' she laughed, as she came dancing through the mountains; 'but the tears of a goddess are like lightning.' Leuder and louder laughed the Queen *Kali* as she wandered through the mountains, so

that the people said it thundered; but the priests—where Jena and Krishna meet at Towli—knew it was Kali, and flung flowers before her face in the great Red Temple that the Rani built on the river-gñats; and the Holy Monkeys, that are Vishnu's, chattered together as they played in the peepul-trees growing in the court of the Temple. Then of a sudden awoke Siva, whom the laughter of Kali awakened, as she danced on the gñats where the Deccan goes down by steps to the Konkan; and in his rage he followed her, and with his scourge he chastened her, that she wept as the rain weeps when the monsoon breaks among the mountains. And her tears fell among the hills, and rolled into the nullahs; and her tears were pearls—like eggs of the peahen—and at sight of them the Lord Siva ceased him from his scourging, and was appeased from his anger; but the pearls were lost in the deep nullahs, save one that the Peishwa had in the Palace Temple on the hill at Párwati—over against Kirkee by Poona—and one that the Rani Saraswati gave to the Red Temple at Towli, having found it in the mountains as one goes by the hill-road to Poona."

The doctor laughed when I had finished reading.

"The 'Tear of Kali' was long gone from Párwati when the Peishwa's power fell at the Battle of Kirkee, at least, one has never heard of it. And I should be sorry for any one whose valuables reposed in the Red Temple at Towli."

"Even if it had been kept there before, the Rajah of Ka'ára would not have been fool enough to leave it there when Lord Dalhousie annexed his kingdom. Perhaps in the confusion then it got lost or stolen."

The doctor nodded.

"And by some queer accident a real or supposed clue to its whereabouts may have got into the hands of De Vesof, and afterwards of Brodie," he said quietly.

#### CHAPTER V.

WE had come now to a point where the path was carried by a narrow bridge across a little nullah that came steeply down from the left.

"Here we branch off," said the doctor, climbing down into the nullah, and leading the way up towards the recesses of the hills.

It was steep, and the path was by no

means apparent. Nevertheless, it had—in places where it was soft and damp—recent footprints, and some of these were unmistakably a sahib's. Then up, through quite a thick jungle: then a halt.

"There are no boot-prints in this mud."

"We've overshot the mark, somehow."

"I don't think so; I think he has left them behind, and put on native shoes."

Snelgrove was much pained at this suggestion of the doctor's.

"Very mean of him. 'Native communications corrupt good manners.'"

The doctor was examining a sketch.

"This way," he said.

"How do you know?"

"By the way the bird in the picture is flying," he replied, and we meekly followed him.

So by many twists across open spurs of mountain, down very rugged nullahs, up others, until we came to a kind of amphitheatre in the heart of the hills. High overhead towered Kali's Shoulder, really like a woman's shoulder from here.

"And this is 'Kali's Lap,'" said the doctor calmly. "Just lie down, you chaps, behind the scrub and look over there."

We peered stealthily out across the valley where he pointed, and there we saw Brodie; up the steep hillside he was clambering, holding on by his hands very often, and close at his heels was Kalbadévi Rao, the Brahmin. Of course the distance was too great for us to see that it was the priest; but we knew it. For some time we watched in silence; the awful, ancient silence of those weird Deccany hills.

The valley was full of temples, all ruined and standing round on spurs of the hills like sentries; the approach to each on the valley side was nearly precipitous, and their rocky bases were garlanded with green.

"Now, you fellows, what steps do you propose?"

"We've taken a good many," replied the frivolous Snelgrove, with every appearance of lighting a cheroot.

"You can stay here and smoke if you like," observed the doctor, "but Lascelles and I didn't come for that. We came to circumvent that devil yonder, and to look after poor Brodie."

"He certainly values my interest in his affairs very much," said the incorrigible Snelgrove, "doesn't he, Cox?"

"My good fellow," said the doctor, "don't you budge if you don't want to. Only it is right to tell you that in my

opinion there is every probability the Baronet has not the least suspicion that that fellow is dogging his steps—that the real Brodie—look!”

By a most difficult ascent Brodie had reached the plateau of one of the temples, the most ruinous, the least important-looking; and by his side stood the Brahmin. There was something odd in their relative positions—something that seemed best explainable by supposing that it was as the doctor said, and that the Scotchman knew nothing of that other haunting presence.

For a moment or two it seemed as if Brodie reeled and would have fallen; hurriedly the priest laid something white against his face and the staggering ceased.

Then into the gloom of the temple they disappeared together.

“Good Heaven! what time we have wasted! It will take us twenty minutes at least to get there—and Heaven knows what that scoundrel is up to.”

It took us half an hour to reach the temple; down to the bottom of the valley and up by that crumbling steep; and now we too gained the worn and ruined terrace in front of the temple into which they had vanished.

It was deathly still; no silver squirrels frisked about the court, or peeped at us from the carvings of the pagoda; no monkeys chattered in the naked branches of the huge, dead peepul-tree that cast no pleasant shadow now.

The temple was larger than it looked; for, though narrow enough, it was tunnelled back into the hillside, and consisted of several chambers, of lessening size, each one raised above the one in front of it. In the foremost of these, under a howdah, stood the great scarlet image of Kali, girded with skulls. Even this place was far from light; to the other chambers could penetrate only such glimmerings of the day as found their way through the narrow doorway that joined each one to that behind it. And these doorways were left and right alternately, as if with the express purpose of securing total darkness without wholly excluding the outer air; or perhaps of preventing the egress of any light by night from the penetralia of the temple. The floors were deep in dust or sand, of which we were glad, as it enabled us to move in perfect silence.

The doctor led the way, I followed, and Snelgrove brought up the rear; and so out of the broad afternoon light, we passed

into the ever-deepening gloom that fitly surrounded the shrine of the foul and cruel Kali.

We had passed through four rooms and mounted four flights of steps since leaving the actual shrine; on entering the fifth we were met by a strip of pale, rosy light shining through the doorway of the sixth chamber.

To this we crept with noiseless step and inward wonderment as to what we should see.

Our surprise was considerable that we saw neither Brodie nor the priest; only another chamber like the rest, but large, and in its way magnificent.

The walls were richly carved, and the roof was gaudily painted; but the principal object was a statue of the goddess Devi, enclosed within gilded gates of trellis work. Within similar gates to right and left were the images of Ganesh and Siva.

All this was visible by the light of a hanging lamp that burned with a ruddy flame and a heavily aromatic odour.

Where were Brodie and Kalbadévi?

There was absolutely nowhere in that chamber where they could be hidden. The floor was quite bare save for sand and dust; there were no projections behind which they could stand in shadow, and the space between the trellis-gates and the images was not more than four feet—and through that narrow space our view of the three gods was quite unobstructed.

Our first thought—certainly it was mine, and probably we all had the same idea—was that from one of the other rooms some passage had opened, unnoticed by us in the darkness, and that we had overshot our mark. They must have turned off into some such passage.

We turned to retrace our steps, and had just reached the doorway leading into the next apartment, when the band of rosy light failed. We drew back instinctively into a corner, and a moment or two later a soft footfall, quick and light, passed us in the darkness.

Even on that silent sand-strewn floor we could be certain of two things—that only one man's footstep had been there, and that it was the tread of a much lighter, smaller man than Brodie.

“It's Kalbadévi—and Brodie's not with him!” whispered the doctor. “You two go in there and search again for Brodie; I'll tackle the Hindu. You can strike matches now, and perhaps you can light that lamp again.”

After Kalbadévi Rao the little doctor hastened eagerly, while we, with an eerie feeling of mystery, obeyed him in going back to search again for any trace of Brodie.

We each had matches, and we found it easy enough to relight the red lamp. Then we once again looked round. There was certainly only one door in the stone wall of the chamber, that by which we had entered.

"See if we can open the door into the shrine."

It opened easily enough, but we found the three statues were flat against the wall; there was no way behind them.

In trying to discover some door or passage behind the statues, I noticed that there was a sort of golden knob on Kali's shoulder. It was not bigger than a pea, but it was quite bright.

"I've never seen any of her images with that before," I observed, and, as I spoke, tried whether it were a mere gilded lump on the marble statue or were screwed in. It came out in my hand, and at the moment of its doing so, there dropped from the low roof of the shrine on to Snelgrove's head what was more like the wooden handle of a skipping-rope than anything else, with about a foot of rope attached to it.

"Hullo!"

Snelgrove was standing immediately in front of Kali at the moment. He raised his hand and pulled hard at the rope, but nothing happened.

"Go outside the shrine a minute."

He did so, and I followed him.

"Now try a pull."

He seized the rope-handle again and I helped him. We put all our weight on it, and slowly and silently a trap door opened in the marble floor straight before the image of the goddess. We propped it up carefully and looked down. A narrow but perfect flight of steps led down into the darkness.

"Brodie's down there somewhere. Come on!"

At the bottom we found ourselves in a square room, the counterpart of that above. It was quite empty, but out of it opened another and there we found our friend.

Here, too, was an image of Kali in a shrine, but it was very, very old, rudely carved of red granite or gneiss, without ornament or gem. No lamp hung before her, the open shrine gates were of rotten wood; it seemed dishonoured and forgotten.

No jewels burned in her ears, the caste marks on her brow were of common paint, and around her neck was an iron chain supporting an oval pendant. The pendant was meant to shut together, and would have held an oval object of the size of perhaps a turkey's egg; but it hung open now, and empty.

On his face before that grisly divinity lay Brodie, and stirred neither hand nor foot as we entered. There was no sign of any violence about him, but when we touched him we could not doubt that he was dead.

Already a chill and clammy dew lay upon his brow, and his flesh had the wax-white hue of death. The "rigor mortis" was not there yet, but there was no hint of life in the laxity of those long and formerly so stalwart limbs.

"We'd better go after the doctor. If he is alive the doctor will be able to do more for him than we can."

"Yes; but I don't fancy leaving him all alone; you go after the doctor and I'll stop here till you get back."

So I heard Snelgrove go, and my dead chum and I were left alone in the darkness. Now and then I struck a match, but they lasted so short a while I gave it up after ten minutes or so.

Snelgrove had not taken long regaining the outer air, but at first he could not see anything either of the Brahmin or the doctor. Then he caught sight of the white garments of the priest, high up the hillside near the foot of an old quarry whence no doubt the material for the temples had been brought. Clambering after him, gaining on him minute by minute, but still some way beneath, was the doctor.

Snelgrove started on his own way after them, and for some time found his attention pretty well taken up by the exertion of climbing that precipitous hillside, and choosing the best and least circuitous route. Then he paused to take breath and look at the way before him, and so doing he glanced upward to see how much the doctor had diminished the distance between himself and the Brahmin.

The Hindu had gained the summit of the old quarry, and by a rough natural stairway the active little Briton was following him.

Suddenly an idea seemed to strike the native. He was standing close to the edge of the quarry, and pushing with all his might at a huge loose mass of stone

that if it fell would both destroy the top-most stages of the path up which the doctor was climbing, and hurl him to the bottom if he should have got high enough to be in its path.

"Oh, for a rifle in my hands!" muttered Snelgrove between his teeth. "There'd be one more devil in his right place in thirty seconds! I wonder if the doctor twigs what that brown rascal is after."

Snelgrove whooped his loudest, and the little doctor paused and turned to look down at him; Snelgrove could see him wave his hand. Again he whooped and pointed to the Hindu. As it happened, the doctor could not see the native.

The priest laughed loud and long; and over the edge of the quarry the great stone came tumbling down, but it did not come alone. Under the Brahmin's feet the slag and earth loosened, and with a clatter went rumbling down into the depths. With one wild shriek his laughter ended, and the mountain-gorges had not ceased their echoes of his mirth ere they gave back the death-cry into which it merged.

To the little doctor it seemed as if the whole mountain were falling down on him; but he was sheltered by the overhanging brow of rock that had prevented his seeing what Kalbadévi was doing; and, except that he was half choked and blinded by dust and sand, took no great hurt.

The upward way was gone, however, and he had to begin a downward climb far more trying.

#### CHAPTER VI.

"No more dead than you are!" said the doctor. "Though he would never have awakened had he not been found."

We had carried Brodie up and laid him on the terrace in the open air. The sun was setting behind Kali's Shoulder, and the shadow lay dark across the valley.

The little doctor, very red and dusty, was leaning over him; and now from his pocket he drew a savage little case full of horribly bright instruments.

"This needle is full of——"

"Morphia and atropine?" I suggested intelligently.

"Nothing of the kind; a very particular discovery of my own against snake-bite. Now, watch."

We watched. Close to Brodie's heart

he bared the chest, and there dug in his little "needle"; squeezed it; and there followed a kind of effervescent sweat.

"Only an experiment—but successful, eh?"

We committed ourselves to no opinion. The Baronet's ashen-grey hue gave place to rosy-red, and the drawn blue lips grew red and soft. He sighed deeply, and sat up.

"Hullo! what the deuce are you doing here? And what's the matter with me?"

He looked stupidly at us all, and blushed a deeper red.

"I'm trying to remember," he said earnestly. "I remember starting well enough——" he paused, and put his hand up to his head. "I remember getting to the place where I changed my shoes," he said absently, "but how did I get here? And who showed you the way? What's that?" he cried. His wandering, purposeless gaze had fallen on the body of the priest. "Why does he look like that?"

"He's dead," replied the doctor gravely. "Kalbadévi Rao, you know."

Brodie nodded. He staggered to his feet and went over to him. He looked down with a strong though restrained repulsion on the dead man.

"Look!" said the doctor; "here's the pearl! Smashed, you see—but there it is!"

"The pearl! Who told you of it? Who told him? How did he get it? I only found out the last clue this morning, and told no one. I was on my way when that—that attack—came on; like the others."

Now Ready, Price Sixpence.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE cottage which Mrs. Romaine had taken for August and September, on Julian's refusal to go abroad, was situated a few miles above Henley. It was a very charming little house, to which the term "cottage" was applicable only in mock humility; and it was very charmingly situated. It had a delightful garden, not large, but full of "roses, and sunflowers, and all sorts of things," as Mrs. Romaine explained to Julian after her visit of inspection. Its lawns sloped down to the river, and altogether, on the same authority, it was a wonderful chance to get hold of it.

The statement which Mrs. Romaine had made to Lady Bracondale on Julian's authority, that there were "nice people about," had originated, as a matter of fact, not with Julian, but with his mother herself. It was quite true, nevertheless; but apparently Julian's sudden desire for quiet had proved infectious. For, the acquaintance between herself and her present neighbours being of the slightest, Mrs. Romaine made no such attempt as might have been expected of her to develope that acquaintance.

She seemed to be strangely without impetus in herself towards action of any kind. She was "resting" some people might have said; she was pausing, certainly. But whether, as the days went on, her life did not signify rather temporary and enforced quiescence, than the

peaceful and pleasant suspension of labour, might have been an open question.

It was a hot, bright August; day after day the sun shone steadily down, as Julian departed for town after an early breakfast, at which his mother never failed to appear. Day after day it shone through all the long, little-broken hours upon the quiet house and garden, about which the one woman's figure moved in almost total solitude, until, with the evening, Julian returned again. Evening after evening the mother and son spent alone, but by no means always together. After their dinner, during which conversation seldom flagged between them, any more than it would have flagged between two friendly and well-bred acquaintances, Mrs. Romaine would sit in the drawing-room with a bit of fashionable fancy-work in her hand, into which she only occasionally put a stitch; and sometimes Julian would spend half an hour with her there, reading the newspaper and carrying on the talk of dinner, or sometimes he would stroll out into the garden at once, and come in only just before bed-time.

Mrs. Romaine never followed him and never questioned him. Perhaps it was the curiously still life she had led which brought so strange and still an expression to her face—a stillness which suggested a slow, wearing waiting, and a mingled concentration, watchfulness, and patience which sat strangely on the face which so few people had seen otherwise than vivacious and superficial.

It was an evening in the second week of September, and she was walking up and down the lawn in the fading sunset light. She was moving with slow, regular steps, with the monotonous motion of a woman to whom the even movement brought some



sort of relief or soothing. There was an indescribable touch of desolateness about her lonely figure as she moved up and down before the empty house.

A servant came out to her by-and-by with some newly-arrived letters. She took them, and then, her monotonous motion being perforce suspended, a sense of physical fatigue seemed to assert itself, and she sat down on a low basket-chair.

A sigh came from her as she did so, one of those sighs which in their unconsciousness are so suggestive of habitual suffering. She paused a moment, looking away into space with haggard, absent eyes. Then she seemed to rouse herself, and took up one of the letters as if forcing herself to seek relief from the current of her monotonous thoughts. She had opened the envelope and read the letter half through in a mechanical, uninterested way, when its contents seemed suddenly to arrest her attention. A change came to her expression, a change which in its slight quickening and revival showed how dulled, almost numbed, it had been before.

She turned once more to the beginning of the letter and read it again.

"DEAR MRS. ROMAYNE,—I am so sorry to have to ask you to postpone the visit which you had promised us for the end of this month. I find that by some stupid mistake my husband and I have given separate invitations for the same date. As there is, unfortunately, no doubt that his invitation was given first, there falls upon me the very disagreeable task of explaining the situation to you and your son, and begging you to forgive me. Yours truly,

"MARION STEWART."

Mrs. Romayne leant back in her chair, not indolently, but with a certain intent consideration in every line of her figure; and letting the hand that held the letter fall on her knee, she sat gazing at the written words with sharp, angrily-sparkling eyes, which looked as though they were bent on piercing through the words themselves to the meaning which she believed they hid. She was evidently surprised and annoyed; as evidently she gave not an instant's credence to the reason alleged for the postponement of the visit in question, and the slight involved in this postponement, indefinite, as she noticed with an unpleasant little smile, seemed to stimulate her.

Her face had grown sharp, and even

vindictive, when her eyes fell on the postmark of the second letter lying on her knee. It was that of the same little Scotch town, the name of which was stamped upon the already opened envelope. She took it up eagerly, and as she saw the handwriting, she paused for an instant, and a flash of intense consideration passed across her face. Then she tore it hastily open. It was from Mrs. Pomeroy, and it conveyed in three long-winded and incoherent sheets a piece of news which the writer was sure would delight Mrs. Romayne.

"Dear Maud," the letter said, was just engaged to "that charming Mr. Loring." Mrs. Pomeroy's mind seemed to be in a state of somewhat considerable confusion between a theoretical and conventional sense that it was very sad for her to lose her daughter, and a certain practical and actual sense, which by no means harmonised with the theoretical one, and all unconsciously threw a good deal of light on the relations between the mother and daughter as they actually existed. The coherence of the letter was further disturbed by sundry sentences, which dovetailed so oddly into the general fabric that they had somewhat the appearance of being inserted to order, and which conveyed various repetitions of "dear Maud's" assurance of Mrs. Romayne's congratulations, and various repetitions of the statement that Mr. Loring's financial position had recently improved amazingly, and that he was sure of a seat in Parliament at the forthcoming general election.

"He has been staying with the Stewarts during the whole of our visit to them," the letter ended. "Dear Lady Marion has been so kind about it, and taken such an interest."

"Ah!"

The exclamation, uttered evidently involuntarily, just above her breath, came from Mrs. Romayne's lips sharp and bitter. She had read the letter through with certain quick movements of her eyebrows, and little mocking smiles coming and going about her thin lips, and they smiled again as she folded the letter deliberately and put it back into its envelope. She was looking thoroughly roused now, and there was a vindictive confidence in her alert, determined, almost excited expression. It was the kindling up of martial spirit at a challenging trumpet-call from a well-known battlefield.

If Marston Loring and his future wife were indeed arranging their forces for the undermining of Mrs. Romaine's social position—and Miss Pomeroy and Loring between them could have pieced out a very sufficient explanation of Lady Marlon Stewart's note—the campaign, judging from appearances at that moment, was likely to be far from a tame one.

Mrs. Romaine was still sitting with the letters in her hand, tapping one foot with impatient vigour upon the grass, and there was the same eager intentness in her eyes, when from the house behind her the sound of a dinner-bell rang out. She started violently, and in the start something seemed to fall between her and the subject on which her thoughts had been busy. A curious shade of that new stillness replaced the eager sharpness on her face. It was the dressing-bell, and she rose mechanically; and as she turned towards the house her eyes fell upon the figure of Julian. He had evidently been standing on the verandah, and as she rose he had turned, and was disappearing into the house. Another shade of stillness fell upon her face, as though the letters she had received, and the feelings they had stirred, had receded into the distance. There was nothing in her eyes now but a certain lurking, heart-sick anxiety, which never waned or lightened, and was not to be repressed.

It often happened that the mother and son did not meet, on Julian's return home in the evening, until dinner-time, and it happened so this evening. The dinner-bell was ringing when Julian came downstairs with a quick word or two of apology, and followed his mother into the dining-room.

Julian looked as though his month's hard work had by no means agreed with him. His face was even painfully thin and worn, and there was an expression of hard concentration about it which seemed to age it strangely. His eyes were haggard and rather sunken. It was a curious feature of a change in him less easily defined, that his likeness to his mother had faded considerably. All the character of his face now seemed to originate about his mouth—that mouth of which Mrs. Romaine had been wont to say with affected gaiety that it was like nobody in particular; that mouth which had been a somewhat weak and undecided feature. There was nothing undecided about it now, and Mrs. Romaine never looked at

it without a deepening of that stillness on her face. It was set into heavy, resolute lines.

No one, indeed, judging from the bare outline of Julian's daily life during that hot August, could have wondered at the signs of physical wear and tear that he exhibited. Ten o'clock, on every one of those sultry days, found him at work, not indeed in the Temple, but in an office in the City, and it was from the same office that he would issue forth at about five o'clock to catch the train for Henley, sometimes with sullen determination, sometimes with a pale, fierce excitement on his face.

The affairs of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company had readjusted themselves, after the blow which had threatened the company's very existence, as hardly the most sanguine could have hoped. Ten days after the announcement of the presence of water in the mine, some of the newspapers published another telegram which had been received by the directors. The passage of the water, by which the existing mine was rendered practically useless, had revealed hitherto unsuspected possibilities, and there appeared to be little doubt that the first mine had been, as it were, only a pledge of still richer strata yet to be worked. One telegram followed another, confirming the report in greater detail. Prospectuses were issued, setting forth a proposal to utilise the opportunity thus opened, and debentures were issued for the providing of the necessary funds. These debentures were taken up somewhat slowly at first, but on the arrival in England of specimens of diamonds from the new lead, together with a circumstantial report, they were taken up with a rush. Works were understood to be already on foot, and dividends were looked for at an early date. The new managing director of the company was Julian Romaine.

There was a kind of dry excitement about him to-night behind the deliberate assumption of conversational interest which was his never-changing manner with his mother now, and his hand shook a little as he poured himself out more wine than usual.

He did not rejoin his mother in the drawing-room, saying something as she left him about having letters to write; and two hours afterwards he was walking up and down the lawn in the moonlight with a cigar.

There was a fierce restlessness in his

step, and there was a fierce restlessness in his face, too. He had been walking there for half an hour when a shadow passed across the blind of the drawing-room window—the night was very hot and the window was wide open—and the blind was drawn up. Mrs. Romayne's figure stood there outlined by the lamplight within. The drawing-room window was shadowed from the moonlight by an angle of the house.

"Good night, Julian!" she called.

Julian stopped in his walk mechanically.

"Good night, mother!" he answered. The figure in the window seemed to hesitate for a moment; then Mrs. Romayne moved and drew down the blind, the lights in the room behind went out one by one, and Julian resumed his walk in the moonlight as mechanically as he had stopped it.

It was his custom to go every morning first to his room in the Temple in case any letters might be waiting for him there, and on the following morning, a slight accident on the line having considerably delayed his train, he paused a moment before giving his order to the cabman. He was very late, and there was a feverish impatience in every line of his face. He had almost decided that any private letters might wait until the next day, when, with a sudden unaccountable reaction, he sprang into the cab and told the man to drive to the Temple.

He had apparently repented of the resolution by the time the cab stopped, for he sprang out with a muttered imprecation on the delay. There was only one letter waiting for him, and he caught it up fiercely. Then the handwriting in which it was directed caught his eye.

All the tumultuous heat and impatience of his face died out suddenly and utterly. He stood for a moment staring down at the letter, white to the very lips. Then he seemed absolutely and physically to set his teeth, and in the intense hardness of determination which set its mark on every muscle of his face, his whole expression would have seemed to deteriorate, markedly and terribly, but for the desperation in his eyes which was little short of agony.

He moved abruptly, crossed the room, unlocked a drawer in his writing-table, and thrust the letter in with quick, deliberate movements, unopened. He locked the drawer again sharply, and turned and went hastily out of the room.

The letter was from Clemence; it was

the first sign of her existence which he had received since their parting on that June evening nearly three months ago.

He was looking only older, harder, and more recklessly resolute when about a quarter of an hour later he entered the office of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company. The feeble-looking little messenger was in solitary possession, and he looked up rather uneasily as Julian wished him a brief good morning and crossed to the door of the manager's room.

"Mr. Ramsay's just gone out, Mr. Romayne," he said. "I was to say he would be in again directly."

Julian made a curt gesture of assent and went on into the private room. There was plenty of work waiting for him, it appeared, and he was still applying himself to it with dogged concentration, when, nearly an hour later, the door opened and Ramsay appeared.

"There you are!" he said indifferently. "I thought you weren't going to turn up this morning."

Julian had just glanced up from the letter he was writing to acknowledge the other man's entrance, and he went on writing as he explained briefly that his train had been delayed.

"No particular reason for wanting me, I suppose?" he said in a brief, business-like way, as he laid down his pen.

Ramsay sat down deliberately, and put his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat.

"Well, yes," he said. "There's a matter here which rather calls for the attention of the managing director."

He held out a letter as he spoke, and Julian took it and read it quickly. Then he laid it down on the table before him, and looked up slowly at Ramsay. His face was rather pale.

"A general meeting of shareholders!" he said. "Demanded!"

There was a moment's pause, while he looked steadily into Ramsay's immovable face, and then he added in the same rather difficult tone:

"Did you expect this, Ramsay?"

"I never expect," returned Ramsay drily. "Such a thing was on the cards, of course."

Julian's face grew dark and calculating.

"Well," he said harshly, after another moment's pause, "it must be arranged for, of course. What do you propose?"

Ramsay answered the question by another.

"Do you happen to know anything," he said, "of a man named Compton—Howard Compton?"

Julian's brows contracted as if with an involuntary effort to detect the relevancy of the question as he answered tersely:

"Yes. He and I belong to the same club."

"You don't know, I suppose, that some shares in the 'Welcome' have drifted into his hands?"

Julian shook his head with a quick frown of vexation.

"Ah!" observed Ramsay; "they have, though. And it has come to my knowledge that various enquiries have been made into the state of the Welcome Diamond Mine; made on the spot, and made in secret. And I've traced these enquiries to this Mr. Howard Compton."

A dreadful grey pallor had begun to spread itself over Julian's face. And the muscles seemed to have grown rigid with the intense force with which he held them to their expression of dogged determination. He did not speak, and Ramsay went on in the same dry, indifferent way:

"He is either a very clever hand, or very cleverly advised. The one point we score at present is that he has not done as he intended to do, and taken us by surprise."

"Do you mean to say——"

The words seemed to come from between Julian's dry, white lips almost without consciousness on his part. His eyes were fixed upon Ramsay with a hard, unseeing kind of stare, his voice was hoarse, uneven, and hardly audible, and it died away leaving the sentence unfinished.

"The meaning is obvious, of course," returned Ramsay. "An affair of this kind is a ticklish thing to pull off, and a hitch of this kind is always possible, though I never came across an affair in which it seemed less probable. I don't know yet exactly how much our friend knows. The meeting won't be a particularly placid affair, of course, and you're likely to have a warm time of it. But, of course, there's a chance that he mayn't know quite enough, and we may be able to pull it through yet."

"And if not?"

Something seemed to rattle in Julian's throat as he spoke the words, and they came out thick and husky.

"If not?" repeated Ramsay. "Well, if not, I think I wouldn't go to that meeting if I were you."

There was a moment's dead silence, broken only by Julian's heavy, laboured breathing. The two men sat there face to face, and their eyes met with a terrible significance of what was better unexpressed in words. Then Ramsay's dull eyes took a deliberate survey of Julian's face. It was drawn and livid, and the elder man rose and took from the cupboard some brandy. He poured it into a glass with a slightly contemptuous smile, and put it into Julian's hand.

"You're the very devil to work," he said drily. "And for all I know you may be first-rate as a winner; but I can't say you're a good loser. And it's a useful lesson to learn in this business."

Julian drank the brandy and rose mechanically. The strong stimulant hardly seemed to touch the blanched horror of his face.

"What do you propose to do?" he said in a stiff, toneless voice.

"Personally, nothing," returned Ramsay, "until I know more. Business will go on as usual. You'll call the meeting, of course. I'll tell Harrison to get the forms ready for you to sign. They must be sent out to-morrow. Going?"

"Yes," said Julian heavily. "There's nothing more I need do to-day."

He took his hat and went slowly out of the office, looking straight before him like a man walking in his sleep. Ramsay looked after him, and stood for a minute rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Not quite what I thought he was," he said to himself; "though he has served this purpose well enough. Pity he hasn't a little more of his father in him. Got all the makings of the right sort, but he can't stay."

## ACROSS THE POND.

THE latest additions to the splendid fleet of floating palaces which now race with something not far short of the speed of a railway train between Europe and America, recall to one's memory the memorable January morning in the year 1842, when Charles Dickens opened the door of a state-room "on board the 'Britannia' steam packet, twelve hundred tons burthen per register, bound for Halifax and Boston, and carrying Her Majesty's mails." Who has not revelled over the whimsicalities of that state-room, with its "very flat quilt covering a very thin mattress, spread

like a surgical plaster on a most inaccessible shelf"? Some of us can easily see in the mind's eye this "utterly impracticable, thoroughly hopeless, and profoundly preposterous box," in such marked contrast to the chaste and pretty little bowers, sketched by a masterly hand, in the lithographed plans attached to the advertisements. Dickens regarded this "room of state" at first as a pleasant fiction, designed by the captain to give better enjoyment of the real state-room to be presently disclosed, and even to the last, its absurdities and discomforts were looked upon as a joke.

Then the saloon—the gorgeous apartment of which such high expectations had been raised. "A long, narrow apartment, not unlike a gigantic hearse, with windows in the sides, having at the upper end a melancholy stove, at which three or four chilly stewards were warming their hands, while on either side, extending down its whole dreary length, was a long, long table, over each of which a rack fixed to the low roof, and stuck full of drinking glasses and cruet-stands, hinted dismally at rolling seas and heavy weather."

Then the ladies' cabin, where they sat down round the fire, just to try the effect. It was rather dark, but somebody said "of course, it would be light at sea," and though nobody knew why, everybody believed and rejoiced. "I remember, too, when we had discovered and exhausted another topic of consolation in the circumstance of this ladies' cabin adjoining our state-room, and the consequently immense feasibility of sitting there at all times and seasons, and had fallen into a momentary silence, leaning our faces on our hands and looking at the fire, one of our party said with the solemn air of a man who had made a discovery: 'What a relish mulled claret will have down here!' which appeared to strike us all most forcibly, as though there was something spicy and high-flavoured in cabins which essentially improved the composition, and rendered it quite incapable of perfection anywhere else."

Crowds of people came down to the wharf to gaze with a kind of dread delight on "the far-famed fast American steamer," and the process of embarkation being finished, the vessel was hauled off into the stream to rest overnight. Next day our travellers go on board to begin their voyage. "There she is!" All eyes are turned to where she lies, dimly discernible through

the gathering fog of the early winter afternoon, and every finger is pointed in the same direction, and murmurs of interest and admiration, as "How beautiful she looks!" "How trim she is!" are heard on every side.

This was the vessel in which Charles Dickens made his first voyage to America with eighty-five fellow-passengers. On Saturday, the 22nd of January, an American pilot boat came alongside, and soon afterwards the "Britannia" steam packet from Liverpool, eighteen days out, was telegraphed at Boston."

The events of the voyage do not concern us here, but merely the duration of it, and the character of the ship in which it was made. For this same "Britannia" was the first vessel belonging to the Cunard Steamship Company, and the first steamer to begin the great Transatlantic mail and passenger service, although not the first steamer to cross the Atlantic. We shall not recall the doings of the "Sirius" and "Great Western," of the "Savannah" and "Royal William," as these were pioneers only.

The Cunard Company was formed in 1839, and their first steamer, the "Britannia," began her first voyage in February, 1840. She had thus been running just two years when Charles Dickens crossed in her, and the fare was—according to the advertisements of 1840—"Passage, including provisions and wine, to Halifax, thirty-four guineas; to Boston, thirty-eight guineas; steward's fee, one guinea." And now after fifty years we have the two new monsters, "Campania" and "Lucania," alongside of which the "Britannia" would look but a toy.

Following the "Britannia" and her sisters, "Acadia," "Caledonia," and "Columbia," came, at various intervals, steamers famous in their day and still remembered even in this generation. Thus, in 1848, were added the "America," "Niagara," "Canada," and "Europa" (all after the traditional custom of the Company with territorial names ending in "a"). In 1851 appeared a larger and more powerful type in the "Asia" and "Africa," of one thousand indicated horse-power, and steaming twelve knots an hour. All the boats of the Cunard Company were of wood down to 1856, when the "Persia" appeared as the first iron steamer to bear the flag. She was of the then immense tonnage of three thousand three hundred tons, was three hundred and eighty feet long by

forty-five feet broad, and had engines of four thousand horse-power, driving her at a speed of thirteen and a half knots an hour. But although of iron, the "Persia," like her sister ship, the "Scotia," was a paddle-boat, or what the Americans call a side-wheeler. These two vessels were the last of the Cunard paddle-steamers, and, indeed, the "Scotia" has of late years been converted into a twin-screw, in which altered form and under another flag she does duty as a telegraph-ship.

With the "China," the Cunard in 1862 began the new era of iron screw-boats. The "China" was not so large as the "Scotia," nor did she average more than twelve knots an hour, but she is memorable as marking a turning-point in the history of the fleet. To her followed, in 1867, the "Russia," a longer boat of over three thousand tons, designed to carry on the Express Service along with the "Scotia," and for long one of the most popular boats on the Atlantic, although she was soon outdone in speed by rivals of other lines. All the next successors of the "Russia" in the Cunard fleet were iron screws, and such names as the "Parthia," "Algeria," "Abyssinia," "Bothnia," and "Scythia" recall to many of us the memory of handsome vessels, each regarded as the most perfect type of her day. The size went on increasing, until in 1881 we find the renowned "Servia"—like all the rest of the fleet, built on the Clyde—of no less than eight thousand five hundred tons, measuring four hundred and seventy-eight feet in length and fifty-two feet in breadth, and propelled by engines of ten thousand horse-power.

The "Servia," again, marked another new departure—the race of express steamers built exclusively for passenger traffic, and with only a side glance for incidental cargo. The tremendous machinery required for the modern Atlantic racers, and the enormous quantity of coal required to feed them, take up so much space that even in the biggest of them there is little room for cargo. Then further, the "Servia" was a novelty in being the first Cunarder built of steel, a material which has been used for all her successors.

The "Aurania," which came out in 1882, marked an alteration in the type of hull, the breadth being greater in proportion to length than in the preceding vessels.

Both the "Servia" and the "Aurania,"

however, were outdone in speed by the "Oregon," a Clyde-built boat flying the Guion flag, which the Cunard Company proceeded to purchase. She had a short but brilliant career, during which she reduced the Atlantic passage to six and a half days, and was unfortunately sunk by a collision off Fire Island in March, 1886.

Meanwhile still bigger and swifter boats than the "Oregon" had appeared, in the "Umbria" (1884) and the "Etruria" (1885), both built by the builders of the famous "Atlantic Greyhounds"—"Alaska," "Arizona," and "Oregon"—the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, Glasgow. These two monsters are of about eight thousand tons each, measuring five hundred feet in length by fifty-seven feet in breadth, and with engines of fourteen thousand five hundred horse-power, developing a speed of nineteen knots. With these vessels the Cunard Company reduced the outward passage, from Queenstown to New York, to a few minutes under six days and two hours, and the homeward passage to a few minutes over six days and three hours.

But even these records were broken by the Inman "City of Paris," in 1889, and the White Star "Teutonic," in 1891, which last vessel brought down the outward record to five days and sixteen hours. As it is to beat the "Teutonic" and her beautiful sister "Majestic" that the Cunard Company have made their latest effort, it should be mentioned that these are twin-screw boats of nine thousand eight hundred tons, measuring five hundred and sixty-six feet in length by fifty-seven and a half in breadth, and having engines of no less than seventeen thousand five hundred to eighteen thousand horse-power, which develop a speed of twenty knots an hour. In point of size, however, they are outdone by the Inman liners "City of Paris" and "City of New York," twin-screw boats of ten thousand five hundred tons, with engines of eighteen thousand five hundred horse-power. The Inman boats were the first to apply the principle of the twin-screw, and the "City of Paris" it was that first broke the six-day record.

The recent launches of the "Campania" and "Lucania" were events of extreme interest in the mechanical and shipping world, for no vessels so large and heavy have been put into the water since the "Great Eastern." The launching of that leviathan, it may be remembered, occupied nearly three months, occasioned serious

injury to numbers of work-people, was destructive of much gear and machinery, and cost about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, which, added to the initial cost of the vessel, completely exhausted the finances of the Company. Such has been the advance in mechanical science since those days of disaster, that the "Campania" glided into the water at the exact moment appointed, doing precisely what she was intended and expected to do, and leaving the "ways" in the great yard at Fairfield as gently and complacently as a ten-ton cutter. And so with the "Lucania" a few months later. The successful launching of these giant vessels is in itself reckoned among the engineering triumphs of our time.

The weight of each of them as it entered the water—that is, the mere shell, without engines, boilers, or heavy fittings—could not be less than nine thousand tons. They were built at an acute angle to the river, which is very narrow at Fairfield, so that they might have a long slant as they left terra firma for the channel scooped out for them by dredgers. The enormous amount of nice calculation required to adjust chains, stays, checks, and all the other appliances, would seem incredible to a builder of the olden time.

And what does the "Campania" represent, after all, now that she is completed? Well, for one thing she represents the highest achievement in naval architecture and marine engineering at present in the world. She embodies the great thought, and labour, and experience, and inventive genius of half a century of ceaseless evolution. In a commercial sense, she expresses the strength of combined capitalistic effort. In a social sense she responds to the hurry and luxury of the age in which we live.

In the days of her famous ancestor, the "Britannia," men were well content to be transported from hemisphere to hemisphere in a fortnight, and the "Britannia" did not do so very much better than the crack sailing-clippers of the Old Black Ball, Dramatic, and other lines, some of which did the run under canvas eastward in seventeen days, and westward in twenty-two days; but, of course, they were dependent on the winds. Nowadays, however, men complain if they cannot get across within a week, and if the "Campania" develops the speed of twenty-three knots an hour that is expected of her, they will be able to get from Queens-

town to New York in little over five days—or, say, in about five and a half days from London.

Whether there is need for such haste is another question. On general principles one would say that a few hours more or less on a journey occupying several days cannot be of much consequence. But in practice it is. We live in an age of high pressure and high speed, when, more than ever it was, time is money. Those who have the money and grudge the time will always travel by the quickest method of conveyance open to them. Hence the reign of express trains with their natural corollary in the race of express steamers. The race is to the swift, and that the race is worth winning one is bound to infer from the persistent effort of each competing Transatlantic company to outstrip its rivals.

The rivalry is not in speed alone, but tends to the perfection of the type in comfort and luxury. The nearest analogy to the Transatlantic express steamer on land is a first-class hotel of the latest style. This ocean development is more probably due to the rapid accumulation of wealth in the hands of restless Americans than to the pressure of British requirements. We are as fond of rapid transit as our cousins, but we have always thought more of comfort than of luxury in travel. Not so the rich American, who desires always to be surrounded by evidences of his own wealth. In the old days of the clippers and the early steamers, very few Americans came to Europe, even for business, and nearly all the passenger-carrying was from east to west. Now the stream of emigration from our shores has practically ceased to flow, and the great majority of ocean passengers both ways are Americans. They come over here to spend their leisure—and their money—much more freely and frequently than we go over to them. The modern ocean liner may be regarded as the triumph of British skill and enterprise called forth by the demands of American wealth and restlessness.

Take the "Campania," for instance, not only the largest and swiftest, but also the most sumptuous and luxurious of any steamer entered for the ocean race. In point of size she is only some sixty feet or so shorter than the "Great Eastern," while her horse-power—thirty thousand—is about five times greater. The "Great Eastern" had one set of paddle-wheels and one screw; the "Campania" has two screws.

The "Great Eastern" was long and ugly, with a bewildering collection of funnels and masts; the "Campania" is a model of beauty, designed on the most perfect lines a naval architect could desire. She has only two funnels—though they are big enough for a railway train to run through—and a couple of slender masts, to add finish rather than to spread canvas.

She does not seem so very big until you get on board of her, and see the great stretch of deck, the enormous sides, the interminable tiers and rows of cabins, and, above all, the tremendous size of her machinery. Her length is six hundred and twenty feet, that is to say, very nearly the eighth of a mile, so that the energetic passenger who must do his "mile before breakfast" has only to take four turns from stem to stern to make his record, and while he is doing his duty mile at the regulation pace, the steamer will have taken him six miles nearer his destination, driving him through the water with all the combined power of thirty thousand horses.

Horse-power, perhaps, is a kind of force too technical to be understood by non-experts, but what everybody can grasp is the fact that the "Campania's" engines are just half as powerful again as those of the renowned "City of Paris."

There is accommodation in her vast interior for four hundred and sixty first-class passengers, two hundred and eighty second-class, and seven hundred steerage passengers, besides a crew of four hundred; and for one thousand six hundred tons of cargo, besides the enormous supplies of coal and stores required for her engines and company. There are six decks, and all but the lowermost one are devoted to the accommodation of passengers and their attendants.

The dining-saloon is spacious enough to seat four hundred and thirty diners; it is mounted in rich, old carved mahogany; it is decorated in ivory and gold, it is lighted by electricity, and it is upholstered in dark russet velvet. From the centre of it, to afford light, rises a "well" right through the drawing-room above and up to the upper deck, a height of over thirty feet.

The drawing-room is mounted in carved and relieved satinwood, artistically upholstered, with arched mirrors, carved mantelpieces, tiled hearths—everything to please the cultured eye and the languid body.

In nothing, however, is the advance more marked, and the "note" of the time more pronounced, than in the bed-chambers or state-rooms. They are so beautifully furnished, so light, so spacious, so free from the general appearance of "shippliness" which pervades one's "berth" even in the best ships, that it will be difficult to believe one is afloat on the ocean wave, when luxuriating on one of the brass bedsteads of the best rooms, or stepping for one's bath-slippers on the velvet pile carpet which covers the floor. Then a new thing is the establishment of rooms "en suite"—complete sets of splendid apartments, in which a family or a party can seclude themselves as luxuriously as in the most perfectly appointed hotel.

But the trail of the serpent—the smell of the ship—that indescribable, impalpable, but heretofore always-present and never-to-be-forgotten odour, is it not still perceptible over all the elegance and beauty? No, for double casings, filled in with non-conductors, separate all the passenger spaces from engine-room and other places necessary to the working of the vessel, but not always agreeable to the senses of hearing and smell.

We might say much about the marvellous character of the engines—the most powerful machines of the "triple-expansion" type yet constructed. Two sets of engines are required to drive the two screws, and these engines are fed by twelve huge boilers fired by ninety-six furnaces. But that is not all. There are powerful engines, of the latest construction, for reversing, for steering, for the electric light, for the refrigerating chamber, for the condensers, for the heating pipes, for the pumps, for the cranes and winches, for all sorts of purposes, making the huge interior in which the machinery is housed like a series of great engine-shops.

These, then—for the "Lucania" is the same—are the latest types of ocean steamers, the lineal descendants of the homely old "Britannia," the mighty and beautiful daughters of a lowly but worthy parent. It has taken fifty years to bring them forth. What will be the type fifty years hence, when our children's children look with a kind of amused interest upon the portraits and descriptions of the monsters which are now exciting our admiration and our wonder? Well, let them smile, the "Campania" is good enough for us in the meantime.



## SOME FORGOTTEN NOVELISTS.

THE immortals in literature are few, the transients are many. Many of those who were once widely read and loudly applauded have now dropped into oblivion, while others who, while they lived and wrote, were neglected and despised, are now classed among the *dii majores* of the literary Olympus. In no section of literature are there fewer masters and a greater mob of more or less facile scribblers than in fiction. Many living novelists, whose names are as household words in the mouths of Mr. Mudie's subscribers, and whose bank-books are in a thoroughly healthy condition, must surely sometimes feel a pang when they reflect how short-lived is the popularity of most writers of fiction; how few artists in prose, as in verse, are not of an age but for all time; and how slender are their own particular chances of earning fame which shall outlast their own day and generation.

Of the novelists of the past, how many are now but names to the few who take an interest in literary history, while by the general reading public they are completely forgotten. The permanent representatives of the fiction of the eighteenth century are Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Goldsmith, and, perhaps, Miss Burney; but there were many others upon whose pens the world of readers once hung enraptured. Mrs. Aphra Behn and Mrs. Haywood would now be classed as hopelessly improper, and, still worse, intolerably dull. Even in their own time, although they were not accused of being dull, and were certainly widely read, the morality of their books was not universally admired. In the "Dunciad," Pope describes the latter of the two ladies as one of "those shameless scribblers who, in libellous memoirs and novels, reveal the faults or misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin of public fame or disturbance of private happiness."

Later in the century, the novel had become a more popular form of literature, and many writers flourished who are now forgotten. The school of romance, originated by the success of Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto," enjoyed a short heyday of popularity. Mystery and horror were its watchwords—mystery and horror which would now fail to raise a single hair on the most excitable of craniums. "The Bravo of Venice," "The Castle Spectre,"

"The Mysteries of Udolpho"—such were the titles of the blood-curdling works that for a time were eagerly devoured.

Heroes and heroines were mixed up with dark and horrible secrets, and much uncanny action of a very stagey kind; but the taste for romantic castles, mysterious corridors, spectres solemnly stalking to the accompaniment of the clank of chains, and all the rest of the absurd machinery and impossible "mise-en-scène," was soon sated; and the names of Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and Clara Reeve, became "to dumb forgetfulness a prey."

The more legitimate novel was cultivated by many men and women of letters who are now but little known and never read. Even the "Man of Feeling," by Henry Mackenzie, which was once in every one's hands, has rested undisturbed for several generations, until, in the present rage for reproducing the works of the past, a publisher has been found enterprising enough to venture a reprint in luxurious "get up" of what was a century ago regarded as the masterpiece of the "Addison of the North"; while as regards Robert Bage, Mrs. Inchbald, Charlotte Smith, and others of that time, it may safely be said that their books are now known only to literary antiquaries. Yet their success at the time of publication was great. Hannah More's "Coelebs in Search of a Wife" went through eight editions in about as many weeks; and a very dull performance it is. Lamb borrowed a copy to read, and, with his unfailing critical acumen, described the story to Coleridge as "one of the very poorest sort of common novels, with the drawback of dull religion in it. Had the religion been high and flavoured, it would have been something." He returned the borrowed book to the lender with the following lines inscribed therein, by way of expressing his contempt for the work and its author:

If ever I marry a wife  
I'll marry a landlord's daughter;  
For then I may sit in the bar,  
And drink cold brandy and water.

The eight editions in eight weeks would seem hardly credible had not De Quincey let us into the secret of how it was managed. In his recollections of Hannah More, he specially mentions the phenomenal success of "Coelebs," and says that the book was widely bought "for no other reason than because some startling amount of editions had already been sold in London." De Quincey then proceeds to

explain that the first three editions, which operated, he says, by their rapid sale, as the decoy editions to the public, and which were probably not very large, had been really bought almost exclusively by distinguished friends of the author, who for months before had been diligently canvassed, and had bespoken their copies before publication. The sale of so many editions—it was not necessary to specify the number of copies of which an edition consisted—in so short a time, attracted the attention of the book-buying world, and the success of the novel was assured. Some books of this period do not altogether deserve the neglect into which they have fallen. One, at least, of Mrs. Inchbald's tales—"Nature and Art"—is worth reading; and some of Mrs. Charlotte Smith's stories are not unworthy of the popularity which they once enjoyed, and have been praised by many good judges.

The present century has produced a bewildering number of novelists of every grade of merit. The greater number may be regarded as condemned to oblivion from the moment of publication. Having never enjoyed the breath of public favour, even in a small degree, they cannot be considered, from the literary point of view, as having lived at all. Of the minority, there are the few whose names are known to all men, and whose books are still read; while the remainder are those who have enjoyed a certain vogue for a longer or shorter period, but have been found lacking in staying power, and in the race for fame have fallen back into the indistinguishable ruck of mediocrities. In some cases the failure is not to be wondered at, but in others the pity of it lies in the fact that to a large extent the failure is undeserved. A striking example of oblivion overtaking the wrong man is the fate of John Galt. It was unfortunate that the publication of his best and most characteristic works coincided, in point of time, with that of the most famous of the *Waverley Novels*. The Wizard of the North was master of all hearts, and it was difficult for any reputation to escape being overshadowed and eclipsed to some extent by the vast popularity of Sir Walter Scott.

Galt's "*Ayrshire Legatees*"—the first of the books by which he deserves to be remembered—was published serially in "*Blackwood's Magazine*," and was attributed by more than one critic to the author of "*Waverley*." It was followed by

the "*Annals of the Parish*," "*The Entail*," "*The Provost*," and other stories illustrative of life and character in the West of Scotland during the latter part of the last century. Of these books the "*Annals of the Parish*" is decidedly the best. Galt's portraits are graphic and life-like, and his character-drawing is discriminating and highly finished. Incident and story are not lacking, but they are subordinated to what is evidently the main object of the writer—the presentation of an absolutely faithful picture of Scottish life and character. "His ministers, his magistrates, his landed proprietors, his merchants, his mechanics, his clowns," it has been well said, "are all portraitures, not so much of individuals as of classes; so minutely, faithfully, and graphically reflected, and so imbued with vitality, that although the local circumstances and situations which tended to mould them into their peculiar phases have now passed away, or scarcely left a trace of their whereabouts, they must ever continue to be regarded, not only as pictures of national manners, genuine transcripts of Scottish life, and domestic illustrations of the historical events of a particular era, but as throwing light upon the combinations of thought and feeling to which these events owed their origin; for what is national character but the general results brought about by the operation of national peculiarities?" Such praise is high, but well-deserved. Yet it is to be feared that to English readers, at least, Galt is little more than a name, which must be classed among those of forgotten novelists.

Another writer of fiction, of lower rank than Galt, who was highly popular in the early years of the century, was Sydney Owenson—Lady Morgan—who may perhaps be still known to a few readers as the author of "*The Wild Irish Girl*," a racy Hibernian story, first published in 1801, which went through seven editions in two years. Lady Morgan followed up this success with a considerable number of novels, all very popular in her day, but now completely forgotten. One of these stories—"The Novice of St. Dominic"—was one of the last books read by William Pitt. It became known that the Great Commoner had declared himself unable to put the book down until he had finished it, and the "*Novice*" forthwith became the rage. Library subscribers fought for it; it was the universal subject of conversation; and even the fame of her previous book, "*The Wild Irish Girl*," was

eclipsed. Yet who now reads, or has read, "The Novice of St. Dominic," which so fascinated the great statesman?

A little later than Lady Morgan, among the smaller fry of writers of fiction who flourished between the setting of Scott and the rising of Dickens, were one or two who must be classed as practically forgotten novelists, although their names are still familiar enough in other connections. There is, for instance, John Gibson Lockhart. His life of Sir Walter is, of course, a classic; and his name is also remembered as a not undistinguished editor of the "Quarterly Review," and translator of Spanish ballads; but as a novelist he is now unknown. Yet "Adam Blair," "Matthew Wald," and others were deservedly popular in their day. Lockhart was master of one of the prime requisites for a great writer, a good style—"clear, direct, and nervous," as Carlyle described it—but his fiction, interesting and well-written as it undoubtedly is, seems just to have missed that saving salt of distinction which might have preserved its vitality. Theodore Hook, again, is still a familiar name. His jokes are quoted and fathered upon other people, just as innumerable jokes made by other people are fathered upon him; his unfortunate career is still used to point a moral and adorn a tale; as a wit and bon vivant he has his niche in our social history, but his fiction is practically forgotten. The "Quarterly Review," venturing into the perilous paths of prophecy, once remarked that "after many clever romances of this age shall have sufficiently occupied public attention, and sunk, like hundreds of those of former generations, into utter oblivion, there are tales of his which will be read with, we venture to think, even greater interest than they commanded in their novelty." Literary prophecy is always rather foolish, and in this particular case there does not appear to be much prospect of the prediction being fulfilled. "Mrs. Ramsbottom" is still used as a kind of synonym for Mrs. Malaprop, but probably few of those who use it remember that it was the signature of Hook to a series of letters, in absurdly bad spelling, published in "John Bull" in 1829; and as regards the novels, does any one now read "Jack Brag," or "Gilbert Gurney," or "Sayings and Doings," or others of the family? We doubt it.

In the thirties and forties one of the

most popular of lady novelists was Mrs. Gore. Her stories of fashionable life had then a great vogue; but no writer of fiction is more completely forgotten by present-day readers than Mrs. Gore. In one book, called "The Cabinet Minister," the scene is laid in the time of the Regency, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan appears among the characters. In another—"Cecil, or the Adventures of a Coxcomb"—there are descriptions of London club-life, which were said to have been supplied by William Beckford, famous as the author of "Vathek" and owner of the treasures of Fonthill. Devices of this kind may secure a temporary popularity for inferior fiction, but cannot ensure permanent fame. Another prolific lady novelist, whose works are now unread, was Mrs. Bray. Her books on Devonshire legends and popular stories are of lasting value; but of her long array of novels, not one can be said to hold a permanent place in literature. With Mrs. Gore may be paired Lady Blessington, who wrote a large number of stories of the fashionable life of her day. She wielded a facile pen, and touched the follies and humours, the fashions and modes of thought, of the hour with a light and brilliant touch; yet oblivion has overtaken her books. Her novels are unread and forgotten, and she herself is remembered chiefly, if not only, on account of her relations with the brilliant array of men, distinguished in politics and famous in literature and art, who once thronged the saloons of Gore House.

The forgotten novelists of this period, however, were not all women. In the list of writers of fiction whose works have been unable to escape the tooth of Time, a place must be found for Robert Plumer Ward. He took himself, and was taken by his contemporaries and friends, very seriously, both as a politician and as a writer. His "Memoirs," with selections from his correspondence, diaries, and unpublished literary remains, were published in two large volumes in 1850. Ward's first novel was issued anonymously in 1825 under the title of "Tremaine." In it the writer made the attempt, always bound to fail, to combine fiction with the discussion of philosophical and religious problems. The book had the temporary popularity often gained by works of this kind. It, and its possible author, supplied a topic for tea-tables and dinner-parties, and the author was the recipient of many flattering encomiums; but it could have no future.

Philosophical and theological points of view are continually changing; the conditions and methods of discussion which are of intense interest at one time, are a few years later as completely out of date as mediæval geography; and the book that depends for the main part of its interest on such discussion is consequently doomed to oblivion, a fate which has surely overtaken "Tremaine." The same may be said of "De Vere," which two years later followed "Tremaine." In his second novel, Ward made politics a leading feature; but political discussions do not conduce to longevity in fiction, any more than philosophical or theological disquisition.

Yet one more novelist may be mentioned in the list of the forgotten, whose name must be included therein with as much regret as that of John Galt. James Hannay was a writer who has hardly received due justice. His first novel, "Singleton Fontenoy, R.N.," published when he was only twenty-three, was welcomed by George Henry Lewes as a "remarkable work," displaying "the exuberance of youth, and the promise of a ripe maturity." Carlyle read it with so much pleasure that he asked the young author to call upon him, and was eloquent in praise of the life of a sailor—a profession which Hannay had followed before taking to literature. "Singleton Fontenoy" was followed by several other novels and collections of sketches, which were popular and much appreciated at the time; but they appear to have failed to maintain their ground. Hannay's work, good as it was, was yet in the second class only; and nowadays the literature of the past is so overborne by the flowing and rising tide of the literature of the present, that only the books of the first class, the really great, outstanding works, whose distinction is universally recognised, have any chance of gaining the attention of most latter-day readers. There will always, however, be a few who will hold lightly by the present and be mindful of the riches of the past; and by such as these, Hannay's "Singleton Fontenoy," and Galt's "Annals of the Parish," will long be regarded as cherished possessions.

## THE OLD ROADS TO BRIGHTON.

It is only by courtesy that we can give the title "old" to any of the roads to Brighton. For, although of some impor-

tance as a fishing town from an early period, Brighthelmston, or Bright Hampton, or Bremston, as it was indifferently called, was almost unknown to London people till the fashion of sea-bathing was first established about the middle of the eighteenth century, or when Dr. Richard Russell "discovered" Brighton in the year 1750, from which time the place flourished greatly, and is described in 1766 as "frequented by the gay and polite, and one of the chief watering-places of the coast." In those days the main-road to Brighton was by Dorking, Horsham, and Steyning, a very picturesque and charming route, which might be adopted with advantage by any one driving or walking, with time to spare, towards the Sussex coast. What pleasant glimpses of rich country, open downs, spreading woods, with parks, plantations, and lovely country seats innumerable, one gains in a drive through Ewell, Epsom, Leatherhead, with its rich bits of river scenery on the "sullen," or rather placid, Mole! Burford Bridge, and the really noble pass between the great buttresses of the North Downs, bring you to cheerful Dorking, and so to the rich levels of the Sussex Weald.

From Horsham the coach driver or the cyclist would choose as the best road with the easiest gradients the way by Cowfold, Henfield, and Pyecombe, through a rich and pleasant country without remarkable features, but the old highway follows the more picturesque route by West Grinstead, where there is a fine church, through the pleasant village of Ashurst, and then to Steyning, one of the nicest of Sussex towns, with many quaint old houses, gabled and with overhanging fronts, and a famous old grammar school, the buildings of which are of great picturesqueness and interest. Half-way up the high street is the old town clock, and the belfry in which hangs the town alarm-bell, with a chain and handle hanging within reach that any one may tug at on the alarm of fire, but where a warning notice suggests fine or imprisonment for false alarmists on the prosecution of "the town commissioners for lighting."

The old highway leads past the church, which boasts a fine Norman nave, with massive columns and round arches enriched with mouldings of many curious forms, and there is a fine chancel arch of the same early period. About a mile further on we come to Bramber Castle, with its magnificent earthworks crowned

by a few broken, ivy-covered walls, now almost overgrown with trees and shrubs. On the height beyond, the modern Landing College, with its still unfinished chapel, shows impressively against the sky. From here the way descends to Old Shoreham, and past its fine old Norman church, and at Shoreham we come upon the tramway, on which we are bowled pleasantly along by the long river haven, with the masts of trading-ships and the funnels and spars of steam-yachts and sailing-yachts showing against the hazy sea-front of Brighton.

By this ancient and pleasant route plied the first pair-horse coaches in 1798 and also the earlier eight-horse fly waggons which carried merchandise and passengers between London and the coast. Pack-horses in strings picked their way along the miry Sussex roads, the best of which were often impassable in the winter months. By this road travelled the great actors of the period, the Kembles, the Siddons, and Edmund Kean, with Matthews, Munden, and the chief comedians of the early part of the century. The same road was traversed by pretty Mrs. Thrale, the great brewer's wife, with clever Fanny Burney crowned with the laurels of *Evelina*, and ponderous but susceptible Samuel Johnson like a tame bear led in silken chains. And the Thrales might claim a sort of historic connection with the Brighton Road. For as Manning tells us: "The Surrey new roads were first lighted and watched on the evening of Michaelmas Day, 1764, and continued in winter to this time, owing to Mr. Thrale, M.P. for Southwark, having been twice robbed in going from the House of Commons by this road to his house in the Boro'. After the second robbery he always took two soldiers to guard him, and they were among the first watchmen appointed."

An alternative route to Brighton, and perhaps the most ancient of all, started from close by Mr. Thrale's brewery—now Barclay and Perkins—beginning at Stone End in Blackman Street, Southwark, and running by Brixton, Streatham, and East Grinstead to Lewes, whence a track-way over the downs led to the then insignificant Brighton. The first part of this road was traversed by Defoe in the seventeenth century, who mentions it as "admirably good," and calls it the great Sussex Road. One of the earliest turnpike Acts, 1718, deals with the road as far as East Grinstead. Before that time the roads across the

great Surrey and Sussex weald had been execrably bad and often impassable for wheeled vehicles, although the legislature had taken them in hand as early as in the reign of Henry the Eighth. At that time the bad roads were attributed to the heavy traffic from the ironworks in the weald, and the chief burden of repairing the roads—by the rough process of emptying so many cartloads of cinder, gravel, stone, or chalk into the yawning sloughs of despond—was cast upon the ironmasters. But the iron industry disappeared from its ancient seat, and still the roads were no better, till the general establishment of turnpike trusts and the heavy tolls levied on an ever increasing traffic brought about a partial reformation, although in a wasteful, burdensome way.

The increasing popularity of Brighton as a seaside resort received a tremendous fillip from the fancy that the Prince Regent—as it is convenient to call him, although he visited Brighton long before he was Regent—took to the place, and soon the necessity was felt for a more direct route to the scene of so much gay and fashionable life. And hence was pieced together the direct highway to Brighton by Reigate and Cuckfield, described by Shergold in his recollections as "the Appian way for high nobility."

Now, where the high nobility went the commonalty in general were sure to follow, and with these we may take our place in the pair-horse coach that started from the "Blossoms," Laurence Lane, at seven a.m. The "Cock" at Sutton was reached by nine, of which there is a capital sketch by Rowlandson in his excursion to Bright-helmstone. We see the low snug inn beyond the wide-stretching toll bar, the vehicles drawn up at the door, the footsore pedestrians tramping along, the high nobility, and the chaise and four. Then the road passes over Banstead Downs, once famous for its flocks, as Pope records:

To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down,  
Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own.

On the downs stands a lonely inn, the "Tangier," built by Admiral Buckall from the spoils of the Moors, and famous for its elderberry wine. The Prince always takes a glass of it from the fair hands of Miss Jeal, and of course the pair-horse coach must loyally follow the Prince's example, both insides and out. At Reigate we must have luncheon—the Prince lunches or dines at the "White Hart," at Reigate—and

again the pair-horse coach is faithful to Prince. While the table is being prepared the passengers are conducted to the Barons' Cave, under Reigate Castle, where the Barons mustered about the Magna Charta business. No one is now invited to visit the cave, at threepence a head, but it is a curious crypt and cavern, and certainly would hold the whole baronage of the United Kingdom, more numerous now than in King John's days.

So far all has been plain sailing, but now it is an affair of crossing the plain of Andred's Weald, here perhaps at its narrowest, but still ten miles across. And this ten miles between Reigate and Crawley, anciently through forest and swamp, but now one of the best stretches of road to be found anywhere about, was the subject of anxious care as early as 1696, when a raised causeway was made between the two places, but intended only for pack animals and horsemen, and guarded at intervals by posts to prevent vehicles from passing that way. But when later on a turnpike road was planned, it was carried out by widening and improving the causeway and removing the posts; and the Brighton coach of to-day rattles over the self-same road that was first put together a couple of centuries ago.

This ten-mile stretch of level road is notable in modern annals as the scene of the proposed sporting match between Lords Lonsdale and Shrewsbury, to drive the distance out and home, twenty miles in all, with four changes, first single, then a pair, again postillon fashion, and lastly four-in-hand. Lord Shrewsbury paid forfeit, and no wonder, for at the time appointed the wildest March weather was raging and the roads were deep in snow. The Post Office parcels coaches were both wedged up in a snowdrift on the previous night and had to be dug out. But Lord Lonsdale was on the spot, and not to disappoint the sporting crowd that had assembled for the event, he started to drive against time. The road had just been cleared by the snow-plough, and in spite of some faint opposition by the county police, who, perhaps naturally, objected to the Queen's highway being converted into a racing track, Lord Lonsdale completed his task in some minutes under the hour.

How the shades of the heroes of old of the Brighton Road must have rejoiced in such a scene! The Prince's friends the Barrymores, three brothers known as Hellgate, Newgate, and Cripplegate, with a

sister from her choice language known as Billingsgate, with Jackson, the pugilist, and the even more famous Tom Cribb, whose favourite fighting ground was close at hand—all these were familiar objects on this Brighton Road, with Sir John Lade, the Prince's Master of the Horse, who began life as a groom, and, after a brilliant career as the friend and mentor of princes of the blood, ended in the same humble capacity. Seated by Sir John, who was one of the finest coachmen of the day, would be Lady Lade, who vied with my Lady Billingsgate in the freedom of her language. The Prince's intimate circle would not be complete without Colonel Hanger, a rough and blustering fellow, but full of a rude and boisterous gaiety in which the Prince delighted, and there was Colonel Mellish, and Tommy Onslow, and poor Sheridan—a pearl among swine—with many others hardly to be mentioned with the foregoing, such as Pitt and Fox, Lord Eldon, and, later, Lord Wellington, whom, by the way, the Prince detested, with his fresh Peninsular laurels. All these were constantly dashing up and down this same Brighton Road between London and what was practically the Court of the reigning Prince.

But to return to the ten-mile course, which is bordered near Horley by a racecourse known as Gatwick Park—we may note it as the scene of an earlier sporting match, in which the Prince Regent was one of the actors. At some roystering banquet at Carlton House, the question arose as to which were easier to drive, turkeys or geese! At that early period every trivial difference of opinion was the subject of a match or wager, and by the advice of his friend Hanger, the Prince took the side of the turkeys, and a match was at once arranged. The Prince was to drive twenty turkeys against twenty geese, which were to be piloted by Mr. Berkeley, the distance—ten miles over the flat, the very ten miles between Reigate and Crawley. The Prince was not an early riser at any time, and four p.m. was fixed for the start. As Colonel Hanger had foretold the turkeys were far more nimble and docile than the geese, and the Prince soon left his competitors far behind, and gleefully offered to back his team for any odds. But as the shadows began to lengthen on the dusty high-road, the turkeys stretched their necks first to one side and then to the other, and then, with a great whirr, one of the leading

birds flew up into a tree to roost, and one after another followed suit. In vain the Prince, who carried a long rod with a red rag fastened at the end, poked at the recreant birds, threw stones at them, and even climbed the trees to dislodge them; the whole flock was presently perched snugly out of reach, and the Prince's only hope was that the geese might be similarly affected at the approach of night. But the confederates who had arranged the whole affair were better versed in natural history than the poor Prince. Geese are nocturnal feeders, and grow more lively as the evening shades prevail, and the Prince had the mortification of seeing the hissing flock go by, with the race now at their mercy.

Such were among the traditions of the road in days gone by, but the coach of to-day takes a slightly different route, avoiding Reigate Hill, and passing through Redhill and Earlswood Common, and making a half-way pause for luncheon at the old "Chequers" at Horley. Then comes Crawley, which the humorous man on the coach asserts to be the longest village in the world, reason why: it has the sun at one end and the moon at the other, as the inn signs are there to testify. Beyond Crawley, we come to hill and forest, the stiff ascent being known unromantically as Hog Hill, beyond which the road passes between St. Leonards and Tilgate Forest, the last remains of the great forest of Andred's Weald, which stretched for seventy miles from east to west.

In the heart of this forest country is Handcross, now a great resort of cyclists, and busier perhaps at the week end than even in the palmy days of coaching, when thirty coaches passed daily in either direction. But passengers by the old stage have recorded how rows of benches were ranged in front of the inn for the use of tired travellers—they did a good deal of walking in those days, the passengers by the slow stages: up the hills for the sake of the horses, and down the hills for their own—and how the host would hospitably offer gin and gingerbread—the gin the veritable "Crow Link," at that time famous even in London gin-shops, and which had never paid a shilling to his Majesty's revenue; for the inns at Friars Oak and Handcross, it was whispered, were nocturnal resorts of the famous Sussex smugglers, who had subterranean stores in the forest hard by. Brighton itself was long a smuggling

centre, and it was whispered that the Prince himself had a weakness for "Crow Link." The last cargo run at Brighton was in 1821, at the bottom of Ship Street, while the corporation sports were going on upon the "Level" beyond the Steyne. Three hundred kegs of hollands were slung and carried off; but it was felt that the business was risky, and that Brighton had become too gay and populous for the purposes of the free-traders.

The old crawling stage of 1801 made its great halt a few miles beyond Handcross, at Staplefield, famous for black cherries and rabbit puddings. Cherry-trees are numerous still: you see them in the cottage gardens, loaded with fruit, which the owner strives to protect by all possible devices from the devouring birds. About a mile from the main-road lies Slaugham Place, a grand old mansion of the sixteenth century, now in ruins, and abandoned to bats and owls. The Coverts of Slaugham, one of whom built this beautiful but strangely placed dwelling, were among the chief landowners of the south, and could ride, according to local tradition, from Southwark to the coast over their own lands and manors every inch of the way.

At Staplefield the road divides, and the "Comet" pursues its way by the more level and, perhaps, the better road which passes through Bolney, and avoiding "the stupendous mount of Clayton," joins the main Brighton Road at the "Plough" at Pyecombe. But the other way is the old coach-road which the Prince and all the famous coachmen of old used. The Marquis of Worcester on the "Beaufort," Sir S. Vincent Cotton with the "Age," Fred Jerningham with the day mail, and coming to recent days, Selby and Godden with their amateur assistants. Selby's great feat of driving to Brighton and back from Piccadilly in seven hours fifty minutes will be still freshly remembered, although it happened as long ago as 1888, and there is a ballad about the Brighton coach of that period which begins:

They say it's just ten years ago since Selby's  
coach first ran,  
With good old Major Dixon on, a thorough  
coaching man.

Selby and the major are both gone to their rest, but their memory still lingers with the fame of the "Old Times" on the old Brighton road.

On the old road lies Cuckfield, one of the nicest little country towns in the

kingdom, and though no longer served by the coach, it is easily accessible by Brighton rail. A small omnibus meets the train at Hayward's Heath, and the drive up to Cuckfield is the pleasantest imaginable, the road everywhere shaded by fine trees, the beech and the oak intermingling their branches with the chestnut and lime, while the ruddy limbs of stately fir-trees glower among the luxuriant verdure. Rich meadows with sleek red and white cows grazing placidly in the sunshine, pleasant country houses secluded among ancient hedges of yew and hornbeams, a footpath winding along the roadside chequered with irregular slabs of the native marble, and to all these pleasant features, as the road winds higher and higher, is added the sweet breath of the upland breeze that comes fresh from the wide sea and fragrant down. You may not feel the breeze in the 'bus, which may happen to be a little crowded, but it comes freshly and gratefully upon you as you get out at the corner of the High Street, where the town clock is and the saddler's shop, at which our driver has something to say about "stuffing that there collar." "My dear," says a lady passenger to her sister—she had owned to having left the place, probably in infancy, but anyhow thirty years ago—"not a bit altered; the same saddler's shop, and I think the same saddler, and there was surely a collar in question, and thirty years ago!"

The quaint winding street, and the pleasant, homely houses and shops can have suffered little change these many years, nor the famous old coaching house, the "Talbot," with its many bow windows and ivy-covered front. Beneath that porch with its slender columns our esteemed Prince Regent may often have stretched his shapely limbs as he alighted from the saddle. For in his earlier years the Prince often rode between Brighton and London, and once there and back in a day. The Prince's ambition was to be a dashing cavalry officer, and he often chafed under his luxurious inaction. It later years it will be remembered that he persuaded himself that he actually had been in action, and had been present under a disguise at Waterloo.

It is difficult to keep the Prince out of the Brighton road; his form crops up in season and out of season; we see him in his low-crowned beaver, his coat of faultless cut, which has been brought in a post-

chaise from London, in charge of two experienced tailors' cutters, who try on the garment, cutting away the slightest wrinkle with a pair of sharp scissors, and subsequently fine-drawing the cut so that the coat shall become the very mould of fashion. An elaborately frilled shirt-front, light-coloured kerseys, and gaiters, complete the costume in which he mounts the giddy height of his phaeton, to which three horses are harnessed tandem, the leader ridden by a postillion, while the Prince drives the other two—a queer but rapid way of getting along which seems to have been his own invention.

But we may get rid of the spectral Regent by strolling into Cuckfield churchyard, where the handsome old Sussex church, with its fine square tower and lofty shingled spire, crowns the crest of the hill, and looks down upon a magnificent prospect; a rich country below, in chequered colours from its various crops, its woods, its homesteads, its parks, and pastures, and, hanging as it were in the air, the grand framework of the downs, crowned with ancient camps and tumuli, and stretching from Mount Harry, by Lewes, where Simon Montfort overthrew King Henry and his son, to where they break away in the great gap in which lies Arundel's proud castle.

A little way down the hill beyond the church a fine avenue of limes opens out, cool and verdant in the drought and heat of summer, leading to a charming ancient gateway of red brick, crowned by the quaint dome and pinnacle of a clock-tower. That part of the structure, they say, comes from old Slaugham Place, already mentioned, but the avenue and gateway belong to Cuckfield Place—a fine old mansion, boldly standing forth, with its many mullioned windows, its gables, quaint dormers, and high-pitched roofs, from verdant lawns and terraces gay with summer blooms, or shut in by mellow brick walls, with ancient summer-houses like watch-towers at the corners. This is the original of Harrison Ainsworth's "Rookwood"; but a cheerful, pleasant-looking place, despite its antiquity, and with none of the histrionic gloom of the novelist's creation. But the name is a good one, and imparts a thrill which the novel itself hardly intensifies. But sitting in Cuckfield churchyard as the shades of evening come on, one recognises the descriptive force of the title as a great colony of rooks rises from the ploughed



land below, and accompanied by whirling flights of fieldfares, spreads itself as a cloud across the sky, and cawing and brawling, hovers for a while over the ancient groves of Cuckfield Park, before it settles with a grand united caw, and is heard no more.

Quiet, indeed, is the night at Cuckfield when the clatter of shop shutters has ceased, and when young Cuckfield has exhausted its quiver of sarcastic shafts, and the whole town has sunk into peaceful slumber. But the old church clock chimes out the hours lustily, and in the small hours of a morning there is a refreshing sound, unheard for months, of rain swishing against the window-panes. It is the breaking of the drought with a vengeance, and for the benefit of such poor mortals as have essayed to traverse the Brighton Road. Yet the refrain of the downpour persuades to slumber, when, b-r-r-r! a roar and a rattle comes down the street as if the fire brigade of heaven had broken loose. Naturally there is a rush to the window, when, behold! it is the parcels mail that is whirling past, with its four stout horses, and the great red van that glows, all dripping wet, with the red eyes of its lamps, which are growing dim in the grey daylight. All is drip and splash on dark roofs and grey house-fronts, shuttered and curtained closely, and all the colour departs from the scene as the glowing red van clatters round the corner and disappears.

It is drip, drip, at breakfast-time, and then there is a break, the clouds move off in huge masses, and the great ridges of the downs appear, their summits covered with wreathing white vapours, suggesting:

Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest.

Stretched before us is the whole of the Appian way, even to where it climbs the dizzy height of Clayton Hill. But first over hill and dale, by Anstey and Riddens farm, across St. John's Common and to Friars Oak, a famous coaching house, just before the forty-third milestone. When you have crowned the summit of Clayton Hill, with its magnificent views over weald and down, a hill often fatal to rash cyclists, and noted for a sad railway disaster in the tunnel beneath it—well, then Brighton begins, with red villas and creeper-covered cottages in every chalky nook, and so along by Pangdean and Patcham with its memories of fierce combats between smugglers and revenue men lang syne, and

through Preston's narrow vale all crowded up with roofs. Here is the Steyne, where fishermen once dried their nets and hauled up their boats in rough weather, and the funny domes of the Pavilion, which, as Sydney Smith said, look as if St. Paul's had pupped.

Again we have the spectre of the Prince thrusting himself like King Charles's head into the memorial. The Prince, who first came down to Brighton in 1782, on a visit to Uncle Cumberland, who lived in a house near the Steyne, a modest residence with a narrow drive in front and gateposts against which, one day, Tommy Onslow managed to scrape the wheels of his phaeton. Now, Tommy was nothing if not a whip, as the old verse records:

What can Tommy Onslow do?  
Drive a phaeton and two.  
Can Tommy Onslow do no more?  
Yes, drive a phaeton and four.

And Tommy felt so keenly the chaff of Uncle Cumberland and nephew, who were looking out of window and laughing "ready to split," that he at once shouted out the offer of a wager to drive his phaeton and four, mark you, twenty times in and out and round the drive without touching, and won the match and saved his reputation.

In contrast to these jovial days of youth we may bring in a record from Greville, who, in 1821, dines with George, now King, at the Pavilion, in gaudy splendour, but all cold and dull, in spite of the King's coarse jokes at table. The after part is duller still, as George "sits by Lady Conyngham and plays patience all the evening."

We may still get a feeling of the Regency days as we stroll down to the "Old Ship" and see the "Comet" start, gay and bright with its spanking team and gentleman whip, and loaded atop with smart people. Merrily sounds the horn and away goes the coach, to show you all the Brighton Road at a glance, and land you in busy London in time for "afternoon tea."

## THE ETERNAL PAST.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

"I AM here, grandmother."

The old lady looked up from her invalid chair.

"Bless my soul, you look thirty."

"I am not far off it."

"Nonsense, nonsense, you are a girl, a pretty girl."

"They say at home that I am a very plain woman."

"Yes, that's the sort of thing they always say at home. You can't be old yet for you have never been young. We must take life in its proper order. I saw you when you were nineteen; you were not young then."

Hilary laughed a little and did not say how very young she had been the year before.

"Your father had just married again, and brought a new family into the house. You were pushed aside; no wonder you were wretched."

It did not seem worth while to say that it was not her father's marriage that had made her wretched and old at nineteen. Mrs. Deane went on speaking:

"Do you know why I sent for you?"

"We supposed you were worse."

"So you came to hand the medicine bottles, read the sermons, 'perform the last offices' for a fractious old woman. Yes, and you'd do all this cheerfully. It's unnatural, shocking; well, you won't have to do anything of the sort."

"What do you want with me, then?"

Hilary spoke drearily, as if it were a matter of course that whatever she was wanted to do must be more or less disagreeable.

Old Mrs. Deane grasped the arms of her chair, and pulled herself gradually into a sitting posture, then to her feet, and so stood upright for a moment; then she dropped back on her couch chuckling, while Hilary exclaimed:

"Good gracious, grandmother!"

"Ah," said Mrs. Deane, "I hadn't done that for a long time, had I? Till a few weeks ago I thought that I was fixed on that sofa for life, and not much more life either, so it occurred to me that I was tired of it all, and I'd get myself either killed or cured. So I sent for a doctor—a specialist, a great man. There was an operation—we won't talk of it—it was nasty; but the result is, I'm cured, not killed. I have several years of pleasant life before me. That's a good thing for me, but it's very hard on you, Hilary."

"Hard on me?"

"Why, yes; you are the only relation I really care for. I have been sorry for you all these years, because you didn't have your chance like other girls; but invalids are selfish creatures, and I did nothing for you.

You see, I always thought I should die soon, and leave you what little I have, and then you would be provided for comfortably. Now I'm cured you won't have the money these twenty years, so you will have to be married. I made up my mind that directly I got over the shock of the operation, I would have you to stay with me, and give you your chance. That's the only fair thing to do."

Married? A chance? Long ago a girl of eighteen had walked among the trees in a dark garden with a lover. That girl had thought of marriage, very reverently and sweetly, as a thing as certain as it was beautiful, but that was very long ago. The old lady's view of things was too startling to be answered off-hand.

"Do you hear, Hilary? I am going to marry you to some one."

"You don't suppose that any one will marry me," she said dully; "I am too old and too plain."

"Nonsense, you are just the average age, and have the average amount of good looks. All you want is the average opportunities. A girl is never plain when a man begins to tell her she is pretty. You have never tried that."

But she had once, only so long ago that probably the effect had gone off.

"I know what county society is like," the old woman went on. "Only one man among thirteen girls, and he with thirteen she relations mounting guard over him. Here you will find things very different. There is a new sort of girl about now, but she hasn't penetrated into the remote districts. You will find plenty of men, and their women won't be greedy of them. Why shouldn't you be loved and married as well as any one else?"

Well, why not? The idea was wonderfully pleasant. It had been beautiful to be loved once. Why not again? Had she been too ready to believe that all her life was wasted because, when she was a child, a man of the world had amused himself? She looked at the sharp old woman doubtfully.

"But you said I looked thirty?"

She spoke breathlessly, eager to know the extent of the odds against her.

"So you do, and faded, and dowdy; no wonder, considering the life you have led in the country, and I have no doubt that your amiable half-sisters, having no other attraction but that of youth, have flung their seventeen and eighteen years of un-gainliness in your face till you feel ninety,

and old for your age at that. Look at your frock—scrimped and dowdy, tight across the chest, and loose in the shoulders, and wrinkled round the waist. You'll feel another girl when you're dressed properly. Catherine will rearrange you—Catrin's my maid, she is very clever. Look at your hair, it's like wet hay; and your complexion, why, that's rather like wet hay too; but all the same, you've the material for a pretty girl, you only want making up."

"Making up!" Hilary was frightened at the words. "What, paint, and hair-dye, and—cotton wool? I would rather be as I am."

"Gracious me! Paint, hair-dye. I was speaking figuratively. I meant, you want to make the best of yourself, wear light clothes, well cut, full in the right place. And that complexion now, it isn't natural, it's the result of ill-health and low spirits; well, there are natural remedies. Catrin knows them—not cosmetics, tonics. And your hair, a little attention and discretion is all it wants, that and the curling irons. Your eyelashes and eyebrows have lost colour, too."

"They never had any colour."

"Hadn't they?—well, they looked all right when you were nineteen. I have no doubt that Catrin will make them look all right now; not by dyes—oh dear, no! Dyes are dreadful things—vulgar—dangerous—got lead in them—give you paralysis of the brain—but one might improve them by a tonic."

A little dimple showed itself on Hilary's thin cheek.

"Of course a dye would be quite harmless if one called it a tonic," she said.

"Oh, you've life in you, yet," said the old lady. "You just put yourself in Catrin's hands and she and I will do our best for you. I'm not a rich woman. I can't give you what is called a season in town—besides, the season is over—but we can have a good time. I have taken a cottage at Marlow to be near some nice people I want you to know who are going to spend two months there. May, their name is; three sisters and a brother, who live together. The father is dead and the mother lives in Algiers—something of an invalid, I fancy. One of the sons lives with her, but he is coming over for the summer. The elder brother is engaged and so are two of the girls, but they are sure to have men friends and ask them down, and if not, Charles May, the brother

from Algiers, is a nice, well-bred lad. The Mays are the new sort of girls. Each of them "does something," painting or writing, you know—stand up for their own sex—mean to have a good time, and are willing that all other girls shall have a good time too. They are well-grown, charming girls, but after a fortnight—in Catrin's hands—you'll be as nice-looking as any of them. This is what I mean by giving you a chance—you have been a good girl for a long while—now you shall have a try at being a happy one."

#### CHAPTER II.

ALL the young people were walking after dinner in the woods. Mrs. Deane had stayed indoors.

"There are so many of you," she said, "that you can chaperon each other."

The engaged couples were on in front. Nan, the eldest girl, had called Betty to walk with her and Joe. Hilary had soon seen that Mrs. Deane had described the May girls truly; they were not all like the girls she had met in the second-rate society she had known. They did not mount guard over their beautiful, young, unengaged brother at all; they made him opportunities; they were making him an opportunity now, and he was taking it.

"I am saying all this very badly, am I not?"

"It's a little amateurish," Hilary admitted.

He laughed.

"Well, I don't care how I say it, so long as it is said—so long as you let me go on saying it. There is nothing new left, you know. Even Shakespeare found that out when he was making love himself—in earnest. You remember the sonnets? 'Fair, kind, and true is all my argument.' Well, what more did he want? That's enough for any one to say."

"She wasn't fair at all, you know."

"Never mind her; you are—that's what I want to say. 'Fair, kind, and true is all my argument.'"

"And she wasn't exactly what one would call kind, either."

"Oh, yes, she was. Kind meant accepting the man. But she wasn't true, and you will be—if you say yes, that is. You haven't said yes, but you will, won't you?"

Dark night, thick-growing trees, a lover's low voice—she had had it all before, perhaps that was why it seemed a little stale and tame to her. But she listened.

"I don't want to hurry you. There is plenty of time. I don't sail till Thursday, you know, but I want to have a day or two left after we are engaged before I go. Don't stop me; if you had been going to say no you would have said it before I had got as far as this. You are going abroad with Mrs. Deane for the winter, so am I—I always go abroad for the winter. Now, if we were to go together—— Oh, how badly I am saying all this!"

"I think you are saying it well enough."

"So long as you know what I mean, so long as you are content to listen to me, what does it matter how I say it? Do you know your hair turns lighter in the dark? That is all I can see of you, that and your white frock. It is so sweet of you to go on wearing that frock because you know I love it. Perhaps it was not because you knew I love it?"

"It was."

It was, for again she was experiencing the truth of that wise old woman's words; the praise of this beautiful young man made her feel pretty, and she was eager to justify it.

"Ah, that's almost saying yes, isn't it? One couldn't exactly bring an action for breach of promise on the strength of it, but it's encouragement, you know. Mrs. Deane will be pleased, won't she? My people will say I am too young; I can't help that. What is the good of love at all if one can't have it when one enjoys it most?"

"You are very young."

"That's why you like me, isn't it? You wouldn't like me if I were an old fogey with spectacles and the gout. I shall come to both, doubtless—they are in the family. Lots of disagreeable things are in the family. I expect I should be intensely disagreeable if I were old."

"You are younger than I am."

"Yes, you tell me so every other day, don't you? I think you are quite conceited about your age, you know it becomes you. It has given that strange, wise look to your eyes. It is there, even when you laugh; that was what I saw first when I met you; it bewilders and fascinates me. I can't understand it."

Ah, but she could! It was the inevitable law of attracting contrasts. He loved her for the wisdom of sorrow in her face, just as she would have loved him for his beautiful foolish youth, if she could only have forgotten that garden—long ago.

"You are a boy," she said.

"I am not—really you know—I am twenty-five."

"Why, I thought Nan was only twenty-five."

"Oh, well, I forgot; well, for all social purposes so she is, you know. I don't want to contradict her, she may be twenty-five as long as she likes, only when it comes to being married I insist on my right to be twenty-five, too."

"It hasn't come to being married."

"But it will, won't it? Do you think I am not serious enough? I am very serious. How can one put what I am feeling now into mere words? Words were all worn out long ago. I wish we were like the birds, limited to a sound or two, so that we should only express ourselves by tones. Words are such ugly sounds to express our love. One says dear—it means so little; there is darling, sweetheart, love. Stand here a moment while I say them all over, and we see which is sweetest. Darling. Oh, it's not so, meaningless after all; and then there is your name. Hilary, Hilary, my darling."

"Ah!"

He had laid his hand on her arm to stop her, for they had walked almost through the little wood. The others had come to a standstill on the edge of the river; it was a little brighter there, for the water caught and reflected what starlight there was. The others were just out of earshot. He said the words again:

"Hilary, my darling, Hilary."

She did not cry out again, but she shivered. That garden, that dark garden, long ago! Their feet had sounded in the damp grass just as they were sounding now. The trees had all turned their leaves inwards, and whispered to themselves just as they did to-night. There was a river there, too, and a lover who said her name again and again and again, making it sound like the words of a song. And this boy with the beautiful delicate face was giving her honest first love.

Nan saw them and called to Hilary to sing something.

"This is almost the last night of summer, and it is so dark and still that we are getting mournful," she said. "Sing to us, there's a dear girl."

"Bother them; don't," said Charlie under his breath. "At least, answer me first, and then sing."

But what should she answer? Till now, marrying him had seemed just a natural seizing of her first real chance of

happiness, now it seemed a positive wrong to his unclouded youth; but it would be cruel to disappoint him. If only she could have forgotten that girl in the garden.

The girls called again for a song, and he entreated for his answer. To delay answering him she sang:

"In Heaven, when I was young,  
The wild woods sung,  
And the breezes came and went  
With their soft delicious scent;  
And oh! I was content  
In Heaven when I was young."

Behind them in the woods they heard a burst of laughter—riotous laughter—but softened by distance and the darkness.

"It's a troupe of Bacchanals who have lost their way in the woods; never mind them. Go on," said Charlie.

"On earth, now I am old,  
The days are cold,  
And the flowers, lie crushed in the fields  
about  
With cruel rain, and rout;  
And oh! my lamp is out  
On earth now I am old."

There was a sound of voices and footsteps among the trees; the girls all drew together, reminded half unpleasantly how late it was. Charlie moved nearer to Hilary.

"What a sad song!" he said. "Why did you sing it?"

A little company of black figures moved out of the black shadow into the dim light by the river, and next moment Hilary heard a voice close to her exclaiming her name.

"Hilary—Hilary Deane." And next moment in a quite conventional tone: "This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Deane. Are you staying here, or have you only missed your train as we have?"

"Staying here."

She was glad he had asked her a question; one can always answer a question, and otherwise she might have been unable to speak.

"A friend of yours, Miss Deane?" asked Charlie, irritated at the interruption, and by way of holding his place at her side against an apparent stranger.

"Mr. Beckwith—Mr. May," Hilary said in a strangely distinct tone. "Mr. Beckwith is an old acquaintance of mine whom I have not seen for a long while, not since I was a child."

#### CHAPTER III.

"It seems the most impossible thing to meet you here."

"Did you think I was dead?" said Hilary, laughing.

"We have missed our train," said Beckwith deliberately, as if trying to give himself time to realise the meeting. "Some of us have gone to find rooms, and the rest have come for a walk. Our parties seem to be fraternising. Some of my friends appear to know yours, apparently. They are all going homewards; we had better follow."

"Interrupted effectually now," muttered Charlie into her other ear. "We can't get rid of this middle-aged bore just yet, I suppose. I am not impatient. You will not say no, will you? But we must have a few words together still to-night; they will be such nice words."

"These are rather interesting people that I am with," Beckwith was saying; "A trifle too much what one would call 'smart,' perhaps. We are only down for the day. Now that boy has gone I can talk to you, Hilary. I wish I could see you. Are you much changed?"

"Oh, yes, I am changed; the years change all of us. That boy, as you call him, spoke of you as a middle-aged bore."

He laughed a little.

"You didn't think so of me once, Hilary."

"No," she said; and the tone might have meant either reproach or indifference.

"I suppose that means you have not thought of me at all?"

"Oh, no, it does not. I have thought of you very often."

"And I of you, Hilary. You don't know how I have longed for your forgiveness lately."

"You have done without it a long while."

"Hilary!"

"Will you say Miss Deane?"

"I beg your pardon. Yes. I have lost all right to call you by a name that was once very dear to me. Miss Deane, if I made you unhappy—it is almost an impertinence to assume that I did."

"Oh, no, it is not," she said coldly. "I was a child, and you were the first comer. It was only natural that I should have believed in you. It is no shame to me that you made me unhappy."

"Well, if I made you unhappy then, it is fit that you should know that you are avenged. I have been thinking a great deal of you. I have had a lesson, Hilary; if I had realised long ago how you would suffer, I would not have acted as I did, and if I had not, I should not have been punished as I am."

"Do you mean," she said, a little scornfully, "that you love some one now who is as false to you as you were to me?"

"Heaven forbid," he said. "No, it is even worse than that, Hilary. She—she is not free."

He said the words with a sort of dramatic reverence, and, prompt to the cue, a man and a woman came along through the trees towards them. Beckwith drew Hilary back into the shadow and stood silent as they passed to join the larger group.

Some one said, "Well, have you got rooms?" Some one else said, "Yes, horrid rooms." There were introductions, scraps of explanation, disjointed words, laughter, loud and unmusical some of it, too loud and harsh for even the moonlight to soften it. Beckwith went on speaking.

"I must tell you. When I met you to-night I was thinking of you, longing for you to know it, that you might be satisfied and forgive me. Forgive me, why, you would pity me if you understood. I do not complain, I would not be happier if I could while she is wretched. Look at her, Hilary, that is the woman who has avenged you."

"Does she love you?"

He answered her in indignant reproach.

"I think you could not have looked at her."

She did not reply to that. She had looked, but had seen nothing that to her thinking could reasonably account for the tone he was taking. Only a small, fair woman, with light-blue eyes, a meek expression, and a very small mouth. Hilary was not impressed.

"Oh, yes; I looked at her," she said. "Is that man with the horrid, coarse laugh her husband?"

The party was coming nearer. Beckwith put his hand on Hilary's arm, and answered under his breath.

"He? No. He is a man who should not be allowed to come within sight of her. He should not be tolerated in the same hemisphere, and he is her husband's chief friend."

A little bitter laugh stayed on Hilary's lips. If the situation were amusing, it was also pathetic. If this man had posed as the cynical man of the world in love with innocence in the past, if he was posing as pure reverence in love with bound virtue now, the second pose was a fit complement of the first, and the one had been and the other was real to him. She remembered how

he had caught her childish romance then by vague hints of a sorrowful past; now he was trying to reach her pity by confession of a tragic present. He was a man who could not be content without a woman to be sorry for him. Oh, yes; she was changed indeed, for now she saw right through her old lover, and all there was in him of heart and brain, and did not feel very angry with him.

"I am really sorry for you, Teddy," she said.

"Women are so sweet; so wonderfully forgiving."

He took her hand and pressed it gratefully; she let the little laugh come then.

"I did not say I had forgiven you; that's another matter."

"Oh, perhaps I can scarcely hope for forgiveness."

There was a certain amount of gratified vanity in the tone. She laughed again. She was so grateful to him for his faults, and for letting his faults be so apparent. The revelation was so pertinent.

Charlie, some twenty paces behind, had just said something that had brought on him the indignation of some one, a woman with a harshly coquettish voice.

"You shockingly rude person. How dare you speak so to an old woman like me? And what are you doing out in the damp at this time of night? If your mother were here you wouldn't dare—what do you suppose she would say?"

He was only a boy, and he gave a boy's answer:

"I shouldn't object to anything my mother said."

"Now, that's as good as telling me to mind my own business," said the coquettish voice, "and all the while I am acting a mother's part to him myself. How is your poor sweet mother, by the way?"

"She's in Algiers."

"Oh, yes, of course; and you are going too—as usual—for the winter. What a good son you are, to give up the season year after year to spend your time with an invalid mother."

Charlie said "Oh," in a tone of intense irritation at being discussed, and the harsh voice went on:

"Well, mind and don't catch a fatal cold before you go to her. Tell your mother I asked after her when you write and give her my love."

"I will tell her I met you."

"That's our hostess," said Beckwith in a tone of depreciation. "Mrs. Patton.

She's well enough." He gave a shrug of the shoulders, suggesting that the last half of his speech was intended to invite comment. Hilary did not answer. The hostess did not interest her. She was loving Charlie's boyish insolence and impatient endurance. He had positively no self-control—he couldn't pose at all.

He was at her side a moment later, speaking in an irritated undertone.

"Dreadful woman. Everybody is interrupting us. Give her love to my mother, indeed. Invalid! She's nothing of the sort, but Algiers suits her. One would think she always went about mournfully in a shawl, groaning."

Beckwith, on the other side of Hilary, could not see the boy, the place was so dark, but he heard a word or two, and with a laugh moved a little further off.

"She's always like that," went on Charlie, "always saying she's old, and wanting some one to contradict her. She lives about three miles from us at home, and will come to see us. I detest her—we all do—but my mother is so sweetly well-bred she can't get rid of her. I shouldn't wonder if that was what first sent her to Algiers."

"She knows you very well. What was she saying about your not being allowed out in the damp?"

"Oh, rubbish; she always talks rubbish. Hilary, their rooms are just at the corner; we shall get rid of them there. You won't let this man go home with you? You will come with me? See how patient I have been. That speaks well for the sort of husband I shall make, doesn't it? Hilary, if you don't get rid of this man, I shall throw the whole party into the lock—one after the other."

Here the three came suddenly out of the darkness. Hilary turned and waited for the others under the gas-lamp. Charlie turned back again. Beckwith saw him distinctly, and was very much astonished. What! was this splendid young man his cast-off love's lover? Then he looked at Hilary, and his second astonishment answered the first.

"Hilary, you have improved—how pretty you are—how smart—to think of your growing up like this, though you were always a pretty child."

Hilary smiled, deliciously conscious of the truth of his words. She did not know if it was the result of Charlie's praise, or Catrin's "natural remedies"; but she felt well-dressed, and handsome.

He stood staring at her amazed.

"Little shy Hilary grown into this; and you said you were changed: I knew you by your voice, Hilary; but I doubt if I should have known you had I seen you."

"Well, we do know each other—at last."

The words bewildered him. He seemed to feel all sorts of subtle meanings in them.

She was looking at him. He was not changed much. Charlie had exaggerated a little when he called him middle-aged. There was the same turn of the head, the same weak shoulders, the same sensitive hands and tired, cynical face—every characteristic which had fascinated that girl long ago in the garden. But this place was not the old garden, and she was not that girl of eighteen.

"And now it is too late to change," Beckwith was saying. "My lot is marked out; I am chosen by Fate to bear a great burden, Hilary. I trust I shall bear it worthily."

In her clear reading of him the words did not sound ridiculous, only pitiful. She said, "Poor Teddy! I am so sorry!" and was angry with herself that she was not sorrier.

The group had divided; three or four men were crossing the lock talking. Beckwith was still appealing to her in undertones, but she did not notice what he said. She was listening to the strange men. She fancied she heard Beckwith's name and a word that sounded like "infatuation."

"The past was sweeter than the present is, Hilary, and Heaven only knows what the future will be. I hope with all my heart that yours will be less sad than mine must needs be. That was a very good-looking boy who was with you when I came. Do you know him well?"

"Oh, very well."

"Your tone says a great deal, Hilary. Believe me, I am glad to hear what I fancy it says. He is your lover?"

"Yes."

"And you mean to marry him?"

"Yes."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE early sunlight of a lovely September morning was streaming into the room through every crack and chink in the blinds and curtains, making the light from the still burning lamp look yellow, dim, and unnatural. It was Julian's sitting-room in the house in Chelsea, and the light, falling here and there, touched into distinctness many of those little luxurious details on which the evening light had fallen on that winter day eighteen months before, when Mrs. Romaine had stood upon the threshold and looked round upon her completed arrangements, waiting then for the use which was to give them life. On a chair by the writing-table, his head dropped sideways on his arm as it rested on the table, sat Julian Romaine asleep.

He was asleep, but he was not at rest. His face was grey and drawn; it twitched painfully, and his hand was fiercely clenched. Gradually an expression of terror and despair gathered on his features, until they were almost convulsed, and with a strangled, gasping cry he woke and started to his feet, trembling in every limb, and with great drops standing on his forehead. He stood clutching at a chair for support, while the first poignant impression of his dream subsided, and then he moved as though impelled by some reactionary impulse to collect himself. He glanced at the clock and saw that the hands pointed to a quarter-past six. He was vaguely conscious of having heard it strike six, so that he

could have slept for a few moments only. His lips twitched slightly at the thought of what those few moments had held for him. Then he realised that he was cold, that all his limbs were stiff and aching, and he dragged himself slowly across the room, drew the curtains and the blinds, and stood there in the sunshine.

It was the first movement of physical consciousness which he had felt since he left the office of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company on the morning of the previous day.

How that day had passed he did not know. Here and there out of the blackness a picture of himself stood out with uncertain distinctness. He knew that he had telegraphed to his mother to the effect that he might not return to Henley for some time. He remembered writing the words though he could recall no mental process by which the elaborate excuse he had made had occurred to him. He knew that somewhere dinner had been placed before him, though where, and whether he had eaten, he knew not at all. For the rest, an impression of ceaseless walking, of interminable streets giving place imperceptibly to the four walls of his own room, made up the only actual background in his memory to the intense mental consciousness which had usurped for the time being the tangibility of material things.

The favourable turn in the affairs of the Welcome Diamond Mine Company had been founded on a deliberate system of forgery and fraud planned by Ramsay, subscribed to and participated in by Julian. The telegram as to the new lead had been concocted in the office in the City; the diamonds exhibited as earnest of the future yield of the mine had been bought for that purpose; and not one penny of the money



paid in debentures had ever been intended for application to the working of the ruined mine. If these facts should come to light—and hostile enquiries once instituted on the spot, only one of those incredibly lucky chances to which gamblers and swindlers alike owe so much could avert such a catastrophe—the consequences were obvious. Public exposure, public ignominy and execration, wholesale and irremediable loss of position, were absolutely inevitable. And as inevitable if he remained in England, the dark gulf in which his life must be swallowed up and closed—as far as everything which constituted life for him was concerned—whether he fled from it or whether it clutched him, was the legitimate reward of his doings—penal servitude.

He could not realise it. He could not face it. He had beaten it back, he had thrust it down again and again during that long day and night, and again and again the horror had swept over him, gaining always in certainty and reality. Struggle against it as he might and did, clutching at his consciousness, shaking and rending it with a force not to be resisted, and growing ever stronger and stronger, there dawned a dazed, bewildered conviction that the end he saw before him was indeed the inevitable end, that in that black gulf, and no other, all his efforts and fierce strivings were to find their consummation. He had dugged it with his own hands; he had followed on towards it in a very desperation of defiance and recklessness, goaded by a grinding sense of failure and frustration to a wild daring which had looked like courage and resolution. But the spirit which had stimulated him was not in himself. All unconscious of it as he was, he had been drunk with the thought of what lay beyond that gulf; drunk with a desperate, unreasoning anticipation of triumph. The hideous possibility of failure confronted him now practically for the first time, and before it all his fictitious stamina shrivelled away, as in its very nature it was bound to do. A vague, confounded comprehension of the consequences which he had brought upon himself rose upon him, walling him in on every side; and about those consequences, as connected with himself, there was all the ghastly incongruity and unreality of a hideous nightmare. He had never understood the realities of life. He had crushed down their impulses in his heart. He had called superficialities essentials; selfish ignorance, practical sense; and he had worked and

fought in a false atmosphere, and for a false aim.

And now, instead of that fictitious triumph which he had looked to grasp, he found himself face to face with facts so sordid and so relentless that he could hardly recognise them as facts at all. His world was tottering into ruins all about him; the clash and crisis of imminent downfall and disgrace was stunning him and shaking him through and through; and in the wild tumult and confusion all the limitation of his nature seemed to break up, as it were, into one blind chaos of protest and repudiation, dominated only by despair. Nothing fixed or steadfast held its place. The very passions by which he had been driven on had been borne down and numbed. The thought of Clemence had become merely a vague element in the confusion. Of his mother he did not think at all. Even that dark factor in his being—the perversion of his instincts as to truth and falsehood, honesty and dishonesty—which had asserted its grim presence with the very awakening of his character; which had dictated the first steps along the path of which he stood now at the end; was swept into solution now with every other element in his character. It had held its place, hitherto, side by side with the other motive powers by which his life had been regulated; dictating the lines on which those powers should work, strengthening and developing with the demands they put upon it. But it had remained the servant of a stronger passion, and as far as any power of support or guidance was concerned it had gone down in the flood. He had no perception, truly, of the moral aspect of his position, no sense of guilt or of remorse. He only knew that he was beaten, that it was all over with him.

He stood there at the window staring out into the sunshine, seeing nothing, conscious of nothing but the gulf before him, as utterly and absolutely isolated in his misery as though he had been the only creature living in the world. The desperate struggle with facts was sinking into a hopeless confused acceptance of them; into a dazed, bewildered contemplation of details which seemed to rise slowly into distinctness out of the fog which hung about them; to rise and fade again without volition on his part. Details connected with the future came first, and he looked at them and understood them with stunned composure as

though they stood outside him all together. Then he found himself wondering heavily as to the time that must pass before the certainty that was in himself became literal knowledge. There was no sense of any possible chance of salvation in his mind.

By-and-by he became heavily and confusedly aware that another day had begun; another day through which he must carry his horrible, bewildering burden—no longer in the semi-unconsciousness of yesterday, but alive now in every fibre to its intolerable pressure.

He went out into the sunshine by-and-by, out into the streets he knew so well; and as he walked along there came upon him a ghastly sense of being but a shadow among shadows. The life about him seemed to have receded to an incalculable distance, to have lost all substance. He himself as he appeared to other people had no existence, and his real self had no existence for any one but himself. He was face to face with black, implacable reality, and before its presence all the superficialities and conventionalities which had usurped its place vanished like the shades they were.

He walked, always with that chill sense of isolation on him, from Chelsea to the City; in motion, in continual motion only, was his misery endurable. Ramsay was not at the office when he arrived, and a message from him, left with the secretary, informed Julian that he would not be there that day. His absence affected Julian not at all. There was no suspense in his mental attitude to make him crave for even a blow to end it. To his battered consciousness delay before the final agony had something of the appearance of rest or respite. He did the work he had come to do with a numbed comprehension of its import, and then as he passed out again into those horribly unreal streets there came upon him a desperate longing for human companionship; a desperate longing to break through his solitude and touch another human creature. He would go to the club he thought dully. He must speak to some one; he must get some assurance of his own identity or its unfamiliarity would drive him mad.

There were two or three men only who were known to him in the room when he arrived, and even as they greeted him they seemed to elude him; to retreat and to lose all tangibility beyond the yawning gulf which lay between himself and them. He tried to talk, he tried des-

perately to bridge the gulf. In vain. He turned away and went out into the streets again, alone with the one terrible reality which the world seemed to contain.

The failure broke him down. An unendurable horror of himself and of the world, a very terror of his misery, rolled down upon him and overwhelmed him. It was one of those realisations of the impotency of humanity before the strokes of the infinitely greater than humanity which seize upon a man sometimes when all the wrappings of life and custom are stripped from him, and he finds himself in primeval defencelessness. He could only fight wildly with it. Those instincts and affinities through which such moments work out strength and comprehension were utterly submerged in him now; and the experience could be for him nothing but a blind horror, giving place at last to the old stunned, hopeless confusion and despair. And when at last he dragged himself upstairs to his room in the Temple late at night he was utterly exhausted, mentally and physically. He dropped into a chair and sank into a heavy sleep.

Ten days followed; ten long days giving place to heavy nights; ten nights passing into monotonous days. By degrees Julian fell into a species of dull routine, in which he ate and drank, and even slept; passed to and fro along the London streets; stunned almost to stupefaction. He went each day to the office and sat there all day long doing little; sitting, for the most part, staring into space or walking up and down with heavy, regular steps. He was rarely disturbed. Ramsay appeared but seldom; his visits were brief, and he was uncommunicative.

At last there came a morning when he reached the office to find upon his desk a letter in Ramsay's familiar handwriting.

Julian sat down before it and looked at it for a moment, his face twitching slightly. Then he broke the seal.

"DEAR ROMAYNE," he read,—“Your friend, Compton, holds the whole affair in his hand. Marston Loring gave him the tip. You will do as you think best about meeting the shareholders. I shall not be present myself, as I am leaving England for the present to-night.—Yours, “ALFRED RAMSAY.”

The letter bore date of the previous day.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

A WHITE face, drawn and set into a look which pitifully travestied the calmness of despair; bloodshot eyes with something in them of the incomprehending agony of a hunted animal; quivering lips which would not take the rigid line at which they aimed, and from which seemed to radiate an indescribable suggestion of youthfulness, which made the bewildered desperation of the face infinitely piteous. Two hours had passed, and Julian was seated at his writing-table in his room in the Temple. He held a pen in his hand, and before him lay a sheet of paper bearing three words only, "My dear Clemence." On the table behind him lay a roughly packed travelling-bag and a "Bradshaw."

Flight, instant flight was the one course that had occurred to him. Such a necessity had been present to him from the first, and in the almost insane terror which had mastered him on finding himself deserted by Ramsay, thoughts which had lain dormant in his mind during the last two days had taken shape almost without volition on his part, and he had made his plans with wild haste. He knew nothing, he thought of nothing but that he must go at once, that at any moment he might find himself stopped, at any moment it might be too late!

No thought of that last refuge of the detected criminal, suicide, presented itself to him. The realities of life were as yet too strange to him. Wrenched from his moorings, tossed away to drift on the pitiless sea, he could not realise what was the depth of that sea, how futile must be his struggles to keep himself afloat. The reality of death had never touched his superficial nature.

He made his preparations with the promptitude of desperation, and as each detail was despatched, one deed that must be done began to press into his consciousness. Some word must be sent to Clemence. With this necessity he found himself at last confronted with no further possibility of postponement.

But no words would come to him. Little as he understood it, all the bewildered misery of his heart was what he wanted to convey to her; all the incoherent horror which was tossing him to and fro. What words were possible when there was no reason, only blind, agonised feeling? There was one aspect of his shipwreck in which it was only the end and consummation of

his ten weeks of silence towards Clemence; those ten weeks in which he saw now only cruelty and futility where he had seen before wisdom and necessity. His failure, his ruin, had a side on which they touched him only in his connection with her; it became the failure to keep the promise he had made her when he saw her last; the ruin of his vision of a life with her. He sat there staring stupidly at the paper, and gradually all thoughts slipped away from him but the thought of Clemence herself. A hunger, such as his selfish young heart had never known, rose in him for her presence, her pity. His misery turned to her, stretching forth empty, despairing hands, until the sick longing dominated his whole consciousness.

Then out of the aching yearning there came to him suddenly a recollection of the letter he had received ten days before; the letter which he had thrust into a drawer in his blind, foolhardy determination, unopened. The end on which he had set himself to wait had vanished for ever. Everything by which he had held was overturned and submerged. But the letter was there still. The letter had come from Clemence.

He unlocked with trembling eagerness the drawer in which he had placed it, drew out the envelope and tore it open. That it could bring no comfort to him, that there could, indeed, be only aggravation of his wretchedness in it, was as nothing to him. It was to touch Clemence that he wanted; Clemence, and Clemence only was the cry of his whole being. The letter was very short, a few lines only. He ran his eyes over it with hungry avidity, and then they seemed to stop suddenly, and all the quivering life seemed to freeze on his features. A moment passed and a great, dry sob broke from him; he dashed his head down upon the table with a bitter, boyish cry:

"Clemmie! Clemmie!"

Simple, beautiful with that wonderful new tenderness which comes to a woman with the consummation of her womanhood, pathetic in their gentleness beyond all words, the few brief lines brought him from Clemence the most sacred tidings that can pass between husband and wife, tidings of the birth of their child.

"Clemmie!"

The word broke from him again, a pitiful, despairing sob, and then he lay there, long, dry sobs shaking him from head to

foot as that bitterest of all waves, the unavailing realisation of what might have been contrasted with what is, swept over him and overwhelmed him. The reality, touched into life by her letter, as though Clemence's voice had spoken to him, which he had thrown away; the reality on which in doing so, he had hurled himself, stood out before him in pitiless distinctness; and in his ignorance and blindness, in his utter want of comprehension of the moral aspect of his acts and the stern justice of the retribution he was meeting, there was no light or cohesion for him anywhere in the world, and darkness and chaos had closed about him.

Nearly an hour passed before he moved, and lifted a white, haggard face, marred with the agony of impotent regret. He looked about him vaguely, pushing his hair back heavily from his forehead, and as his eye fell upon the travelling-bag, that instinctive sense of the necessity upon him which had stirred him with no consciousness on his part, deepened into a mechanically active impulse. He must go. He paused a moment, and then he drew out a fresh sheet of paper.

"Falconer!" he muttered. "Falconer will see to them. There's no one else!"

It was as though the fire through which he was passing had burnt away from him all recollection, even of his mother. He had thought of her for long only as the source of all that was unpleasant in his life. Now in the sharpness of his pain a haze had spread itself over the past, and all thought of the means by which the present position had been brought about was obliterated.

He wrote rapidly, desperately, in a handwriting which was hardly legible, for a few minutes; then he thrust the letter into an envelope, which he directed to Dennis Falconer, and rose. His original intention of writing to Clemence had left him. It had become an impossibility, and side by side with his sense of his utter incapacity to find any words in which to speak to her, there had risen in him a heartbroken impulse to see her face once more and for the last time.

The sunshine of the day had given place to a drizzling rain when he turned into that quiet little street which had witnessed their last meeting. The dazed sense of the necessity for flight was strong upon him. Darkness had fallen; he had left his room for the last time; in another hour he would be in the Liverpool train a fugitive

from justice; and in the terror and confusion of the realisation of that one all-absorbing fact, the only other thought that lived in him was his blind desire for one sight of Clemence. He had come to the little street unreasoningly, weighing no probabilities as to whether or no she would be at work; not even understanding that there were probabilities to weigh; coming there simply because he had seen her there before and knew of no other chance of seeing her. He took up his position in a doorway by which she must pass, and waited. It seemed to him that he had been standing there, utterly alone, for hours, when the door, from which his haggard, sunken eyes had never stirred, opened.

As on that other occasion Clemence was the last to come out, but she came this time walking quickly and eagerly. For an instant as she passed beneath the lamp the light fell on her face, and as Julian's eyes rested on it for that instant, he clutched at the railing by which he stood. Then she came on in the shadow, still followed by those hungry eyes.

Perhaps she felt their gaze. Perhaps her own heart felt the pang that was rending his. In the very act of passing him she stopped suddenly and turned towards him, looking into the dimness in which he was shrouded. She stretched out her hands with a low, inarticulate cry.

He had her in his arms straining her to him with a despairing passion which he had never known before, and she clung to him half frightened by his touch.

"Julian!" she whispered. Then as no word came from him, only his burning kisses pressed upon her upturned face, she went on softly: "Dear, weren't you going to speak to me?" Still he did not speak, and with a look and accent indescribably beautiful in their tender womanliness, she said: "You didn't think I would reproach you?"

"It's good-bye, Clemmie," he muttered hoarsely. "Good-bye! I—I'm going away for—a little while."

He could as easily have killed her, at that moment, as have told her the truth.

"Going away!" she echoed, with a little catch in her breath. "Where, dear?"

"To—to America." He could not tell her all the truth, but there was no power in him to originate an unnecessary lie. He felt her arms tighten about him, and he answered the appeal hoarsely, hurrying out the words. "I—I'm leaving a letter about

you, and——" his voice died away in his throat as he tried to speak of his child, and then he went on rapidly and unevenly: "It will be—all right. Clemence! Clemence! try to forgive me. Good-bye, dear, good-bye!"

He drew her hands from about his neck, kissing them wildly. Her hold tightened instinctively upon his fingers, and she was trembling very much.

"You're not going—now!" she whispered.

"Yes," he answered hoarsely. "Now!"

Then, as he saw the look which came over her face, the desperate necessity for reassuring her came upon him. He tried to smile.

"America is nothing nowadays, you know," he said in a harsh, unnatural tone. "It's no distance. I shall be—back directly. Say good-bye to me, won't you? I must go."

She let her face fall on his shoulder, pressing it closer and closer, as though she could never tear herself away.

"I'm frightened for you, dear," she said. "I'm frightened. Are you sure, sure, there is nothing—wrong?"

"Quite sure—of course."

"You will be back soon?"

"Quite soon."

There was a moment's quivering silence, and then Clemence slowly lifted her face. He took her in his arms again, and their lips met in one long agonised kiss. Neither spoke again. When he released her, Julian, with a face like death, turned and went away down the street, his head bent, his whole figure tense as though he were facing a blinding wind. Clemence stood for a moment still as a statue, her eyes wide, her face quite quiet. Then she too went away through the night.

#### SOME GREAT WRITERS AND THEIR FAVOURITE READING.

"How pleasant it is to reflect," says Leigh Hunt in one of his pleasantly discursive essays, "that the greatest lovers of books have themselves become books." And, indeed, most of the master spirits of literature have loved books rather as great readers than as jealous collectors of rare volumes. There was no society in London so agreeable that Macaulay would have preferred it at breakfast or at dinner to the company of Sterne or Fielding, Horace Walpole or Boswell. Gibbon, again, was

possessed with a love of reading, which he declared in a well-known phrase he would not exchange for the treasures of India; and Southey, in one of his letters to Miss Bowles, says: "Books are all but everything to me. I live with them and by them, and might almost say for them and in them." This love of reading has generally taken possession of its willing victims at a very early age, and has stayed with them till the close of life. Coleridge, while at school, read through the entire catalogue of books in a neighbouring library, folios and all, at his own hazard as to whether he understood them or not; "running all risks in skulking out to get the two volumes which I was entitled to have daily." With this passion for knowledge, therefore, it is hardly surprising that before his fifteenth year he had bewildered himself in metaphysics and in theological controversy. With regard to Lord Byron while at Dulwich, Dr. Glennie tells us that the future poet had found among other books open to him a set of British poets from Chaucer to Churchill, "which I am almost tempted to say he had more than once perused from beginning to end." At a later period Byron himself says: "I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else reads." Keats devoured all the books of history, travel, and fiction in his school library, and was for ever borrowing more. "In my mind's eye," says his schoolfellow, Mr. Cowden Clarke, "I now see him at supper, sitting back on the form from the table holding the folio volume of Burnet's 'History of his own Time' between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it." Henry Hallam read many books when four years old, and composed sonnets at ten. Lord Macaulay, before he was fifteen, in writing to his mother, recommends her (perhaps somewhat to her astonishment)—to read Boccaccio—at least, in Dryden's metrical version—and goes on to compare his merits with those of Chaucer, to whom he "infinitely prefers him."

Tales of travel and adventure are never without their charm for imaginative minds, and the works of the old novelists have had a great effect in stimulating the fancy of those who were themselves destined to rival their teachers in the art of romance.

An enthusiastic lover of fiction was Hazlitt, the critic, and few writers have urged its claims with a greater degree of eloquence. Cooke's edition of the "British Novelists" entranced him, and the world he found out in their pages was to him "a dance

through life, a perpetual gala day." Of their power to gild the barrenness of life he writes, "Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, this Christian's burden, drop from off one's back and transport oneself by the help of a little musty duodecimo to the time when 'ignorance was bliss,' and when we first got a peep at the raree show of the world through the glass of fiction!" Even at the close of his life he was able to read the recently published novel of "Paul Clifford" with undiminished enjoyment, and to lose himself for a while in the highwayman's stirring adventures.

The great dramatists have claimed—as is natural—many admirers among literary men, though there have not been wanting some who were unable to see any charm in their writings. Charles Lamb read them at a time when little attention was paid to them, and his study of Massinger and Beaumont and Fletcher led him to write the drama "John Woodvil." The dramatists, he declares, were "a first love"—one to which, indeed, he always remained true—and with all the zeal of a book-lover he was wont to spend more than he could well afford in purchasing old folio editions of his favourite authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Byron, on the other hand, calls the old dramatists "mad and morbid mountebanks," a judgement which shows him to have been unaware of the artistic tendencies of his day. Carlyle, again, hardly ever refers to the Elizabethan dramatists with the exception of Shakespeare.

The remarkable hold taken by the Greek and Latin classics on the minds of the majority of our principal writers is reflected in their works. The idea of treating the classics as light literature is not one which would commend itself to the ordinary schoolboy of to-day. Many of our old writers, however, did so regard them. Milton, when staying at Horton, enjoyed a complete holiday in turning over the Latin and Greek authors. The poet Prior was first noticed as a boy by Lord Dorset sitting in his uncle's tavern and reading Horace. Gray, writing to Horace Walpole from Burnham in Buckinghamshire, says that he is reclining at the foot of one of the venerable beeches, while "the timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil as I commonly do." He delighted, however, more especially to wander

in the less trodden paths of classical literature, and writing to his friend Wharton in 1747, he says: "I have read Pausanias and Athenæus all through, and Æschylus again. I am now in Pindar and Lysias, for I take verse and prose together like bread and cheese." Yet this somewhat severe course of reading did not prevent him from appreciating the elegant trifling of the French authors Grasset and Piron, whose influence is seen in the poem which immortalised Horace Walpole's cat, "Selima." Homer has always had many admirers, and, particularly in Chapman's translation, has often proved a powerful stimulus to poetic fancy. Macaulay, with his omnivorous appetite for literature, is said to have read no less than fourteen books of the *Odyssey* in a walk between Worcester and Malvern. Of our own poets, the beauty of the ever vernal Chaucer,

Whose fresh woods

Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year,

has only comparatively recently received adequate recognition. Spenser, on the other hand, especially in the "*Faëry Queen*," has been the favourite reading of nearly every poet. Pope delighted in it. It is said of Keats by a friend that "though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was the '*Faëry Queen*' that awakened his genius." Leigh Hunt says: "When a melancholy thought is importunate I give another glance at my Spenser." Milton, like Spenser, claims an almost universal allegiance. It was one of Walter Savage Landor's favourite books, and while living in South Wales he writes: "My prejudices in favour of ancient literature began to wear away on reading '*Paradise Lost*,' and even the great hexameter sounded to me tinkling when I had recited aloud in my solitary walks on the seashore the haughty appeal of Satan and the repentance of Eve." Dr. Johnson is said to have gorged books, and it is interesting to know who his favourite authors were, though censure rather than praise is the characteristic note of the great literary despot's style—as in his reply to some one who asked him whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written "*Ossian*." "Yes, sir. Many men, many women, and many children!" The "*Pilgrim's Progress*" won his regard, and Burton's "*Anatomy of Melancholy*" was, he declared, the only book which ever got him out of bed sooner than he wished. He also looked favourably on the works of Sir

Thomas Browne. Of some of his contemporaries he affected to have a very poor opinion. "What influence," he asks, "can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais." With equal perverseness he tries to make out that Sheridan is dull, "naturally dull, but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him." "Such an excess of stupidity, sir," he winds up, "is not in nature."

Very different is the estimate of Sheridan formed by Byron, who was never tired of praising him as the author of the best modern comedy, the best farce, and the best oration ever heard in this country. The Italian poets of the Middle Ages have ever been the favourite reading of a select few. Men as different as Milton, Gray, and Shelley have all been admirers of Dante and Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto, while Byron preferred Tasso to Spenser. Boccaccio has been loved by many men of letters from the time of Chaucer. Landor when at Fiesole read him with all the additional advantages of local colouring, and Shelley writes: "How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us." Leigh Hunt includes him in a list of the favourite works in his library: "I looked sideways," he says, "at my Spenser, my Theocritus, and my 'Arabian Nights,' then above at my Italian poets, then behind me at my Dryden, and Pope, my romances, and my Boccaccio, then on my left side at my Chaucer, who lay on a writing-desk, and thought how natural it was in Charles Lamb to give a kiss to an old folio as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer." The very perusal of the backs of such books he held to be a discipline of humanity, and yielded to none in his love of bookstall urbanity. "I have spent," he writes, "as happy moments over the stalls—until the woman came out—as any literary apprentice boy who ought to be moving onwards."

Southey's "Life of Wesley" was called by Coleridge a darling book, the favourite of his library, more often in his hands than any other, and to this and the "Life of Baxter" he was wont to resort whenever sickness or languor made him feel the want of an old friend. The poems of William Lisle Bowles had a great influence

both on Coleridge and on Charles Lamb. Coleridge wrote of the work as having "done his heart more good than all the other books he ever read, excepting his Bible." Lamb complains when at the India House that not a soul there loved Bowles, and scarce one had heard of Burns. Chance has very frequently had a marked effect in determining the bent of a future author's genius or the path of literature in which he would hereafter tread. The "Books lying open millions of surprises" are alluded to by De Quincey; "books, that is to say, left casually open without design or consciousness, from which some careless passer-by, when throwing the most negligent of glances upon the page, has been startled by a solitary word lying as it were in ambush waiting and lurking for him, and looking at him steadily as an eye searching the haunted places in his conscience."

The direction of Dr. Johnson's studies was partly determined, we are told, by the discovery of a folio of Petrarch lying on a shelf where he was looking for apples. It was an accident again which threw the continuation of Echard's Roman History in the way of Gibbon. "To me," he says, "the reigns of the successors of Constantine were absolutely new, and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast. . . . I procured the second and third volumes of Howell's 'History of the World,' which exhibit the Byzantine period on a larger scale. Simon Ockley first opened my eyes, and I was led from one book to another, till I had ranged round the circle of Oriental history." Burns, too, though he had the choice of such works as the "Spectator," "Locke on the Human Understanding," and Pope, together with odd plays of Shakespeare, which formed the staple reading of his home, nevertheless owed most to an old collection of songs. "This," he says, "was my vade mecum! I pored over them during my rest or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, and sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is!" Charles Lamb was one of the many admirers of Isaac Walton's "Compleat Angler," and none have paid that work a handsomer tribute of praise. "It would sweeten a man's temper," he exclaimed, "at any time to read it; it would Chris-

flamish every discordant, angry passion." But his favourite authors, after all—the sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention—were old Kit Marlowe and Drayton, Drummond, of Hawthornden, and Cowley; and, in one of his essays, he recalls the time he spent at Blakesware, and "the cheerful store-room in whose lob-window seat I used to sit and read Cowley with the grass plot before, and the hum and flapping of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me."

Shelley was a great reader all through his too brief life. As a boy at school at Sion House his favourite amusement was novel-reading; and at Oxford he is said to have been lost in books for sixteen out of the twenty-four hours of each day. When at Pisa he was up betimes reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread. The Bible, with its fervour of diction and wealth of imagery, had a considerable influence upon him—as upon his brother poet Byron—one of his favourite parts being the Book of Job. Ever fond of sailing, he sometimes read as he steered, and at his death his jacket was found with a volume of *Æschylus* in one pocket and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back as if the reader in the act of reading had hastily thrust it away.

Among women authors, Jane Austen was nourished on standard literature; she was minutely acquainted with Richardson, and was fond of Johnson's works, and read the "Spectator," like every one else in those days; but she was especially devoted to Crabbe, of whom she was wont to say that if she ever married she could fancy being Mrs. Crabbe. In later years she was charmed with Scott's poetry, and admired the first Waverley Novels.

A curious selection of books fed the mind of George Eliot in her earlier days: Elia's "Essays," Defoe's "History of the Devil," the now-forgotten "Rasselas" of Dr. Johnson, and the "Pilgrim's Progress"—as perennially inspiring as the "Fairy Queen," or the "Thousand and One Nights." At a later date she was fascinated with "Waverley."

Such are some of the books which have been the favourite reading of many great minds—books "within whose silent chambers treasure lies, preserved from age to age," by whose means so many have been enabled to preserve the early freshness of their love for the ideal which, according to Hazlitt, consists in "the

heavenly tints of fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the springtide of human life."

## LADIES "ON THE ROAD."

I REMEMBER reading somewhere that the men who first rode velocipedes in London were hooted and mobbed all through the streets; why, Heaven knows, unless that they were daring to do something that had never been done before, and must therefore be unconventional. In the same way lady bicyclists are having a bit of a bad time just now. An American bishop, we are told, declares that they remind him of witches on broomsticks; while from Paris come newspapers vehemently demonstrating that these curious animals, the lady bicyclists, who perambulate the Bois, are, without exception, members of the foreign colony of the French capital. In this country people content themselves pretty much with shrugging their shoulders and declaring that none of theirs shall go and do likewise; which seems a pity, considering from what an extremely pleasant and healthful exercise their girls are being debarred. However, it is to be hoped that all these prejudices will soon have evaporated. Tricycles for ladies have for the last ten or fifteen years been condoned, or, at least, tolerated by most; and before long I believe it cannot fail to be recognised that bicycles, while not one whit more mannish, are infinitely prettier and more graceful than the three-wheelers, besides having a thousand recommendations in their favour from the point of view of economy of labour and strength.

But it is not my mission to preach the two-wheeler. Rather I would draw attention to the pleasures of cycle touring—to be sure, I never tried tricycle touring, but I dare say, with the addition of a few drawbacks, it resembles the two-wheeled machine. By no other mode of travelling can one so thoroughly and so pleasantly become acquainted with the beauties of a country. In pedestrianism, only the very strong can cover enough ground without over-fatigue; in the railway, one covers too much ground without obtaining a definite idea of any single scene, and as for touring on horseback, it is replete with so many worries and responsibilities—equine lame feet, sore backs, and influenzas—that one would a great deal rather be sitting at home at ease.



By this I do not mean to infer that cycle touring is without its difficulties. No; more appropriate would it be to say that,

Only those who brave its dangers  
Comprehend its mysteries.

Luggage disappears, gets jumbled up with other people's in railway parcel-offices, and fails to arrive in time at its hotel destinations. When it is there right and tight, you are not, nor likely to be, having got storm-staid in some village or other twenty miles away. When you are hungry you can never find a shop, or when thirsty a stream, and it is an utter impossibility to discover a smithy when your cycle is in want of a little patching up. But all these are the mere inevitable accompaniments of the journey, the spices which lend a flavour of adventure to expeditions which might otherwise grow prosaically smooth. The main fact is that you can steer yourself with perfect independence through the most charming scenes, can stop to admire or to rest when such is your good pleasure, and can inhale more ozone in a week than your poor town-bound friends have the chance of appropriating to themselves in a whole year.

One of the pleasantest tours I ever made, and one which I could confidently recommend to a couple of lady cyclists, was from Inverness to Gairloch—in other words, across Scotland from sea to sea—a route which embraces some of our finest loch and mountain scenery. The stages ought to be made extremely easy, namely, Strathpeffer, Achnasheen, and Loch Maree; the luggage being sent on in front, in the first two instances by train, and in the last by coach or parcel post.

It was, as far as I remember, about the end of July or the beginning of August that my friend and I set out on this expedition. Waterproof-capes, combs, soap and towels, and a cyclist's touring guide made up the sum of our personal equipments, and our iron steeds were first-class pneumatic safeties.

Along the breezy shores of the Beaulieu Firth, and through a considerable expanse of wooded country, our first day's journey led us. I recollect that we passed by the historical and catholic domain of the Simon Frasers, getting a glimpse of Lord Lovat's seat, Beaufort Castle, from the fact that I had always taken a special interest in that unlucky Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, who was out in the '45, and who, after innumerable ups and downs—and notwith-

standing that he had all the cunning of the Heathen Chinee in his headpiece—landed himself on Tower Hill when upwards of eighty years of age. He was a fat, comical-looking old man, as can be seen by the curious little painting of him in our National Portrait Gallery; and there are many of his odd sayings still related—none more characteristic perhaps than that with which he greeted the crowds assembled at his execution: "God save us," he exclaimed, as he mounted the scaffold, "why should there be such a bustle about taking off an old, grey head, that can't get up three steps without two men to support it?"

Strathpeffer, or "the Strath" as it is called, is worth two or three days' exploiting. I know it of old and all its attractions. In the first place, however, I should say, do not drink the waters without medical sanction. When you hear a doctor's gig rattle by after midnight in Strathpeffer, it is ten to one that somebody has been experimenting on them on his own account. What untold sufferings are entailed thereby I have no notion, as forbidden fruits in the shape of nauseous medicinal fluid are for me void of temptation.

There is a great grassy knoll, you can scarcely call it hill, at one end of Strathpeffer, from which you get a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Knock Farrel is its name; I have seen it in summer literally garlanded with pink and white dog-roses. You climb to the top in order to inspect a vitrified fort—a thing that nobody seems to understand much about—and while you are there you receive an object lesson which gives you a clear understanding on some other points which till then have probably been merely vague designations in your mind. One long sweep of country, for instance, you discern to be marked out in patches after the fashion of a badly drawn chessboard, and in some corner of each of these you will distinguish a tiny thatched hovel. You are looking down on Ross-shire, and these are some of the abodes of the famous Ross-shire crofters. To the east stretches the blue Cromarty Firth, to the west loom the jagged and peaked mountains of Ross-shire. From northwards, Ben Wyvis, in her tarnished glory, looks down upon you shamefacedly; for, whereas she pretended to stand highest amongst Scotch summits, she has now been relegated definitely to a fourth or fifth place amongst them.

More than one loch greets your eyes; and surely, too—unless, as I fear, the Cat's Back comes in the way—the silver streak of Conon River, in the midst of which as likely as not are to be seen men knee-deep, stooping in search of pearl oysters. I have called Knock Farrel a knoll, but after all it is a goodish sized knoll for the people who live in the bleak peat country behind, and who have to toil heavily laden over it—as I have seen them doing—every time they go to fetch in provisions from Ding-wall or the Strath.

We cyclists were very kindly treated—petted, even, I might say—in the little hotel in Strathpeffer at which we put up. Having passed a dreamless night, we were awakened at an early hour by the stirring strains of the bagpipes of the official village-rouser, and soon after we got under weigh for our journey, the whole of the hotel guests coming down to see us off. One good woman, judging probably from my eye-glasses, and the strong-minded nature of our enterprise, had quite settled in her own mind that I was an author.

"You will write an account of the tour for a magazine, will you not?" she whispered insinuatingly, as we walked down the garden in front of the hotel.

"Oh, by all means," I answered recklessly.

Promises of that sort are so easily made.

"And—and, my dear," here her voice dwindled almost to a sigh, "you will be sure, will you not, to—to put me in, too?"

Again recklessly I answered in the affirmative; upon which, with as cordial a hand-shake as if we had been acquainted for years, we parted for ever and a day.

I have no intention of describing here the route from Strathpeffer to Achnasheen—it is all in the guide-books, a great deal better put, I dare say, than I could give it. You make straight for these rugged, towering mountains, summits of which you descried from Knock Farrel. With every mile the scenery gets wilder and grander, and yet you come here and there upon wooded glens, calm, sedgy lochs, gentle waterfalls. The air is intensely exhilarating, laden with the honey-scents of the heather and the pungent fragrance of bog-myrtles, and charged with the music of the pee-wee or lark, of the sparkling, dancing salmon-stream, or the roaring, splashing river.

"Every Highlandman is a gentleman,"

Queen Victoria is reported to have said. We had not gone far over Ross-shire before we discovered that every Highlandman deemed it incumbent on him to doff his bonnet to us, and that if we would not be outdone in the matter of politeness we must at least be prepared to return the greeting. Very picturesque the shepherds looked with their plaids, crooks, and broad bonnets, and their wonderfully intelligent companions, the collies, trotting at their heels, or doing their behests amongst the sheep up the far-distant mountain-sides. How many words these faithful followers carry in the vocabulary of their understandings I cannot tell, but I should think a good many, and all Gaelic, of course. I remember being much amused once in New Zealand at a complication which arose on a large station, over the question of Highland and Lowland dogs. Some half-dozen of the shepherds—true Celts who had never forsaken their mother tongue—were leaving for Scotland, and their dogs, highly trained, valuable animals belonging to the squatter, were handed over to the incoming shepherds, who, as it happened, were every one of them Anglo-Saxons. But when it came to work, it was found that the poor collies, with the best will in the world, could not manage to understand their new masters, the Gaelic being the only tongue they knew, and English to them a foreign language.

Another discovery—and not so pleasant a one—which we made as we penetrated farther and farther into the Highlands, was that we had come upon a region in which horses and bicycles had not yet made acquaintance, and where the sheen of our steel bearings bade fair to despatch whole waggonsfuls of our fellow-creatures over the nearest handy precipices.

At Achnasheen—of which I shall say nothing except that its name, "Field of Rain," is an appropriate one—we spent most of our evening in a vain attempt to master, under instructions from a table-maid, the pronunciation of Loch Rosque—which comes out something like Achroisg—having failed to arrive at an understanding with the one shopkeeper about the purchase of a newspaper. Our "Ciamar tha thus" produced all sorts of commodities from pipe-clay to fishing hooks, but not a vestige of printed matter. One of the aborigines—a pretty, dark-eyed boy, apparently about fourteen years of age—I did hear making use of the English at one hotel; and the soft prolonged sibilance of

the tones, combined with the burden of their meaning, haunted me for many a day after. He was standing at the hotel bar at the time, and the words he hissed out were these: "A glass of whis-s-s-ky," and again, "A gla-a-ss of whis-ky."

As we were leaving Achnasheen we passed two captive eagles gazing through iron bars out upon their beloved mountain fastnesses. Motionless, solitary, disdainful, they seemed to us the incarnation of hopelessness and proud despair; while in sharp contrast a roe deer bounded wild and free along the loch-side in front of us.

But I shall not be so rash as to drift into a description of this day's route either. The view from Glen Docherty down upon Loch Maree is one that, once seen, is not likely to be forgotten; and the loch shores themselves, now all sylvan beauty—tangles of silver birch, mountain ash, and stately fir—and again fiercely, ruggedly wild, sheer down weather-beaten precipices and foaming torrents, make an indelible impression on the memories of all who have visited them.

When we put up at Talladale, half-way along the loch, we found ourselves merged in an entirely new order of beings. The frequenters of this hotel might be described as a kind of amphibious animals. The greater part of their day was spent in boats with ghillies; and what time they passed on shore was consecrated to the contemplation of their own or their rivals' plates of trout, and the planning of further campaigns. Just as in Shepherd's at Cairo one must talk Egyptology or nothing, so here one was nowhere without a knowledge of rod fishing. The hero of the evening, indeed, was the man who had caught the largest trout, and to his words of wisdom we all listened with gaping mouths.

I must not forget, however, that one man—a brawny Anglo-Indian Colonel, who, with his five-foot-eleven wife, had had one of the best catches of the day—made a valiant attempt at dinner-time to put aside for the nonce the eternal angling jargon. As he helped himself to haggis—a dish which in the Scotland of to-day is prepared only for the English visitors—he made the announcement that he had seen that afternoon a couple of magpies, "and two of these mean grief, unfortunately."

"To be sure," said a lady by his side. "One joy, two grief."

"Yes, and do you know," continued the Colonel, "I have always had an eerie

feeling about that, on account of what once happened to my father. It was when he was quite a young man. He was travelling through Devonshire on a coach, and as they went along a magpie happened to alight on the road in front. 'One joy,' said a passenger. But immediately somebody else shouted, 'Two grief,' and another, 'Three a wedding.' Then just as a fourth bird appeared and my father had 'Four death' on his lips, with a tremendous crash down toppled the coach over the side of a little wooden bridge they were crossing, and the poor beggar of a driver had his neck broken."

There was a momentary pause when the Colonel had done speaking, then:

"Just so," exclaimed a little drily the man who had hooked the finest trout, "the fellow had been paying too much attention to the magpies and not enough to his horses' heads probably," and with that he commenced again upon the question of dressing fly hooks.

But the gallant Colonel was not to be discouraged. A little later, somebody having disdainfully rejected a mayonnaise because the lobster had been tinned, he opened out in the defence of tinned meats generally.

"In India," he said, "we consider them as luxuries. If one can afford to buy things tinned, one may be independent of the native markets altogether. Why, a man with his house full of tinned meats is thought to be simply in clover out there. Green peas, American pears, oatmeal, German sausages, there is nothing you need be without. I remember an amusing story about a country-bred lady, that shows you exactly what tinned meats are to the Anglo-Indians. You know what country-bred means, don't you? People born in India, and of English or European parents, who—through want of cash—have never been sent home, but have been educated at hill-stations, in convents, or something of the sort.

"It's a queer thing, but these country-breds have often the oddest notions about things. The lady I am thinking of was dining one day in company with the wife of a member of the Supreme Council, a 'burra mem,' who had just returned from a visit home.

"And you dined with the Queen?" asked the country-bred, breathless with excitement.

"Yes."

"At Balmoral?"

"'Yes, at Balmoral."

"Then, waving her little jewelled fingers"—and here the Colonel extended to right and left his own great brown paws, distorting at the same time his sternly handsome countenance into a sad misrepresentation of a woman's simper:

"'Ah!' she cried with certainty. 'Ah, everything there in tin, I presume!'"

I am sorry to have to end up the account of our tour with anything so humiliating, but truth compels me to state that when we reached Gairloch on this occasion we had very much the appearance of a couple of drowned rats. The fact is, the whole blame of it rested with my companion. At the outset she had dubbed her bicycle—which was a new one—with the inauspicious name of Kelpie, in spite of my protests—supported by such quotations as:

The Kelpy has risen from the fathomless pool,  
He has lighted his candle of death and of dool;  
and

Hark! heard ye the Kelpy reply as we passed?  
God's blessing on the warder, he locked the  
bridge fast!

All that come to my cove are sunk,  
Priest or layman, lover or monk!—

that Kelpies were nasty, vicious creatures who went in solely for drowning human beings. And as, on account of my extra carefulness all along the line, Kelpie had failed to duck us in the lochs, or throw us over a bridge—a thing he was not far off doing, by the way, at the Grudie—he had taken the mean revenge of running us fair into the centre of a thunderstorm and drowning us with rain-water instead.

## A TRIP TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN.

TAKING into consideration the vast numbers of globe-trotters who annually spread themselves over the surface of the earth, it is a subject for regret how so few find their way to the land of the Ice King.

If it were possible to purchase a Cook's ticket, doubtless more would see the advisability of going North, but under the existing conditions, even if a person should desire to brace himself, or herself, into new life by inhaling for a few weeks the unequalled air of the ice-bound sea, the opportunities of doing so are so few that the ratio is likely to remain as it stands.

To read of the ozone breezes of the Arctic Ocean is to smell health, though afar off, and so, perhaps, there are a

few who will gladly follow me to the Frost King's realm, and sniff in imagination the purest ether that our world can boast of.

The seventh of April was the day on which the steam-whaler "W——" was expected to lift her anchor, and set sail for the Arctic Circle. It was to be my first voyage on the salt sea, and, as I was to sail on board in the capacity of surgeon, little wonder that my youthful fancy pictured what reality seldom equals.

The day arrived, but a fierce north wind had risen, and for ten dragging days I wandered through the dreary streets of Peterhead, paced the quay, and listened in the low-roofed fo'c's'le to the imaginative yarns of an old Greenland salt.

With his imagination and my own fervid one, by the end of these ten days, a cruise on an Arctic whaler was nothing less, to my mind, than one of the expected delights of Paradise.

On the morning of the seventeenth all was bustle and confusion, and by the afternoon we had bidden farewell, we had left the crowded quay, and the old ship "W——," with her 'sprit to the north, was steaming steadily, though slowly, to the land of expectation.

The sea was calm, but there was a long, smooth swell rolling on to us, in which the ship sank and rose with the gracefulness of a sea-bird. For two hours I walked the quarter-deck, pitching hither and thither at the mercy of the waves, and forcing myself and the grinning helmsman to believe that I was appreciating the graceful bearing of the vessel. But nature will assert itself, and somehow the motion lost its charm, so I crept below to my narrow bunk, and Paradise was veiled.

Next morning my nose was assailed with the strong odour of ship's coffee and fried ham, and on looking out I discovered the two mates and the engineer engaged in a very businesslike manner. "What stomachs they have!" I thought to myself, and then turned away with a sudden shudder.

Thirty-six hours from the time we started the anchor was run out, and we lay motionless in the harbour of Lerwick, surrounded by a circle of screaming sea-gulls; and from that hour I could drain ship's coffee and eat fried ham with the best of them, and continued to do so till the end.

Fifteen Shetland seamen came aboard,

and these made up our complement of sixty all told. Mere lads were the most of these islanders, but tall, healthy, robust fellows, with honest, smiling, eager faces.

Several "fitting out" merchants also visited us, with great bundles of Shetland mittens, and long strings of sea-boots, which they piled on the deck and proceeded to dispose of to all comers.

The sea-boots were not in my line, but it is necessary for each man on board to have in his possession some six pairs of mittens. A Shetland mitten is a distinctly special product of the island. It is upwards of twelve inches long from the thumb to the tip, and adds a peculiar element of comedy to the wearer, when first seen.

When the merchants had been disposed of, and the pilot was aboard, we again raised the anchor to a swelling chorus, and left the last of civilisation until we anchored, five months later, in the same spacious harbour.

I stood long on the poop, and watched the rocky cliffs of the treeless islands sinking, sinking beneath the sea.

Iceland, of Viking memory and the home of the Sægs, we saw as a dim shadow on the horizon. And, then, shall I ever forget that eventful morning, when I rose to find myself, for the first time, amid a field of ice!

I rushed to the bridge, and gazed over the strange scene. It was like a dream of fairyland, so new, so fair, so peaceful. Not a cloud, nor the faintest shadow of one, dimmed the sky. The sun shone from the blue dome with a dazzling glory. The sea lay like a vast mirror, save where it washed with a soft splash on the thousands of floating snow-crowned ice-blocks, glittering in green, and blue, and silver, as they rose and sank on the almost imperceptible swell. Hundreds of white wings swept ceaselessly around us, trailing long shadows behind them, or chasing those before them, over the glassy surface of the ocean.

Away on the port bow was a black speck. Nearer and nearer we approached it, threading our way through the gleaming ice-pack, and leaving a long wake behind us, dotted with our noisy companions the "mollies," and outlined by the hovering snow-birds.

It was a seal, a beautiful soft-eyed creature, basking in the warm rays of the sun. As the dark hull of the ship pressed on its vision it lifted its head and regarded us with a curious stare, but without fear,

for we passed quite close to it—in fact, struck a corner of the very block on which it was resting.

A harpooner fired from the chains and killed it; and in the space of three minutes a boat was lowered, the seal was "flinched," the men were aboard again, and we were off. This was the first example I had had of the dexterity required and exhibited on board a whaler.

The men were in high spirits at this trifling success, which they regard with such superstitious belief. For if the first seal is secured, it is a full voyage in their eyes, but should it escape, then an empty ship is next thing to a certainty, and every old salt will make it an unhappy period for the young hands.

I looked back, and could not help shuddering as my eyes rested on the mangled carcase of the poor seal, then surrounded by a vast cloud of birds, rising and falling, bursting and combining again like the long columns of gnats above our own streams.

Great Arctic gulls, fierce burgomasters, and determined mollies in one confused, fighting, and screaming mass, tearing the "krang" (flesh) from the yet quivering corpse with their curved beaks; flapping at, striking at, and tumbling with each other in savage contest, to rise among the stooping terns and snow-birds, spattered and crimsoned from the affray.

The wind fell, and for two days a dark trail of smoke in the cloudless sky marked our passage.

And now we are out of the ice-pack and into the open sea once more; not gliding over a shimmering surface, but rolling helplessly in a long side swell, the propeller at times churning up the water into foam, and anon whirling in space.

A line of bobbing black heads, crossing our course—resembling the buoys of a herring-net—caught my eye. Another line and another followed, some irregular, and some in perfect formation. These were seals migrating for their annual general assembly to a certain point of ice fixed in the mind of each in some mysterious manner.

To find this point is of the first importance to a sealer, and to do so he endeavours to cross the track of the seals. It seems scarcely credible, but it is none the less true, that every seal knows the exact point where they are to collect, and where they do collect in their millions from all parts of the Arctic Ocean.

I communicated my news to the first mate, as I well knew what we were looking for, but he had already informed the captain. Their track having been notified, our course was altered, and for two hundred miles we followed their line, blindly relying on their instinct to be at last successful.

Some days afterwards, when I was seated at the bow, the smoke of a steamer was perceived on the horizon. All eyes were turned on the dull streak. She was turning about in a most suspicious manner, and surmising was at its height when the specioneer sang out from the crow's nest that she was picking up seals. Loud were the maledictions from the fo'c's'le. "Full steam ahead," was the order from the bridge, and next minute the engines were at it in earnest, and the fireman was heard slamming to the iron doors as he fed the slumbering fires.

It was one o'clock on the twenty-ninth of April when we steamed into a peninsula of ice, where we had marked the steamer, and found we were just too late. Nothing remained for us but certain evidence of the success of our rival, whom we could see steaming at full speed to the eastward, hoping to fall across another "patch" in that quarter of the "point."

What a horrible picture she had left to us—a ghastly field of death and butchery. On all sides mutilated carcasses grinned at us amid the blood-stained snow—an awful evidence of the presence of man; of the wants of civilisation, and of how these are satisfied.

Our friend had gone to the east, so we steered to the west, with an empty ship but with hopeful hearts. We had not pushed far when it was evident by the orders from the crow's nest that seals were in sight. And, sure enough, there they were, forming a clean-cut, black line on the horizon.

Nearer and nearer we crept to the vast army, stretching in its millions around us as far as the eye could reach, lying like the shadow of a stupendous thunder-cloud on the face of the ice-field.

I had seen the wild ducks feeding on the marshes; I had seen the dotted sheep on the hillsides of Braemar; but here was life as I had never seen it—units in their millions gathered from all parts of the Arctic Ocean to one centre.

Within a quarter of a mile of the nearest patch, the engines were stopped, and all hands, with the exception of the

captain and half-a-dozen men, left the ship and took their way towards the seals.

The two mates, the specioneer, three harpooners, and myself carried firearms in the form of Martini-Henry and Expresses. One man with a boat-hook attended each rifle to assist him in case of accidents, while the rest of the crew followed in groups, "flinched" the seals that were shot, and towed the skins into heaps ready for the ship when she proceeded to pick them up.

What could I not relate of this day of all days to a sealer! How many pages could I not fill did I dare to recall the danger, the excitement of that one day on the ice; how we had to spring from block to block across the open sea; how the ice gave beneath me; how I fell in; how I left the rest in my foolish eagerness; how I crept up to the sleeping seals, rifle in hand, like a murderer that I was; how the mist came down; how I did not notice the hoisting of the Jack; and, lastly, how I got lost for my pains, and lay down beside a poor seal I had shot.

Five hundred "saddle-backs" fell to our rifles. The skins were piled in a huge heap on deck, after which came the "making off"—separating the blubber from the skin—and when the deck was partly cleared, we once more set sail, leaving behind us a grim history written on the snow.

For a month we searched the bays and indentures of the ice-field in a vain quest for leviathan. And once we attempted to steam through a large sheet of "bay-ice"—ice found during the spring—and failed. There was a heavy swell running outside in the open, which jammed it in on us, causing us to experience what among heavier ice would have been the much feared "nip." As it was, our efforts to keep it apart from us by ice-anchors and wire cables proved useless, the latter bursting asunder in a most dangerous manner.

Around us reared confused, heightening masses of crushed ice-blocks, and from below came a thunderous sound of grating, grinding, and crushing.

The captain grew alarmed for the safety of the rudder, so the ice-saws and axes were produced, and the men and myself set to work with a will to cut a passage for the ship.

We lay two hundred yards from open water, which, however, was fast packing up. We cut from the open towards the

ship, and ran out the pieces with long poles and boat-hooks as they were severed. It was disheartening work, for almost as fast as we cut our way the edges closed again. We persevered, and at last succeeded, yet it took fifty men sixteen hours to cut that passage, and when the ship did steam ahead there was not an inch to spare on either side.

The sheets of bay-ice kept us out of the field; as nothing could be done under the circumstances but wait for the heat of summer to help us, we steered south in the direction of an island called Jan Mayne, latitude seventy-one degrees.

Here, on the fifteenth of June, we fell in with a pack of what are commonly known among sailors as "Bladders"—because of a peculiar bladder-like structure they carry on the front of the head—but more correctly named crested seal, for the same reason. This is the largest species in the Arctic, if we except the ground seal, which is very rare.

They differ from the common "saddle-back" in shunning the young flat ice as a summer resort, and in having a distinct preference for the highest and oldest to be found. I have seen a "bladder" looking down at me from an edge of ice twenty feet and even more above the sea, and it is a common occurrence to find yourself up to the neck in soft snow, or in a snow water lake, when you venture to seek your victim.

This was another day never to be forgotten. It was all boating. Shall I ever forget how the sun shone on that fifteenth of June; the cloudless sky; the blue, blue ocean; the great snow-clad ice-blocks, floating grand and massive in their perfect whiteness, pinnacled, columned, and curved, bearing on their snowy bosoms thousands of tiny, gleaming lakes of pure fresh water?

Three hundred skins covered the deck, measuring, on an average, eight to ten feet; so, well satisfied with our sealing, we again turned northward in search of the whale.

The sun had helped us, and the bay-ice had gone, so we entered at a great harbour where the ice, not being beaten into a solid barrier by the swell, admitted of a passage.

We steamed straight in, for the season was advancing on us, and the captain had come to the conclusion that the whales were well inside if they were anywhere.

Gradually the sea became greener and gluey, owing to the presence of vast quan-

ties of animalcula called whales' food. The presence of this, and what is termed "spoutings," raised the hopes of all to a high pitch; but alas, alas!

In we steamed, farther and farther, now gliding over unruffled inland lakes, now fixing our ice-anchors to the lee of some gigantic floe when the Storm King reigned, or lying by in some lovely "bight," where the great creature we were in search of might be expected to sport itself.

At times a narwhal was secured by a watchful boat's crew as they lay in wait by the floe edge, and many a "floe-rat"—a small seal—fell a victim to the bullet as it swam or bobbed curiously around the ship.

We were then little more than fifty miles from Greenland. It is seldom that a ship can penetrate so near to land, but the "set" of the ice was in our favour. Its great peaked mountains rose before us in all their blue splendour, with one summit—called the Church—towering conspicuously above its fellows. There was a delicious warmth in the breeze that blew off it, and what sailors call a "land heat" in the air. One man professed to have been there, and he yarned to me on the forepeak of the diamonds, the gold, the bears, the deer, the white hares, the white foxes, the ptarmigan, the cranberries, and the blueberries to be found there.

When I thought of the diamonds I turned to my companion and enquired how it happened he was not a millionaire, and he gave me to understand that just as he was stooping to fill his pockets, "a darned, meddlin', interferin' crittur o' a bar" wanted to go halves with him.

We were so near land, and as the ice seemed fairly loose, the captain thought he would try and force a passage through the famous Lancaster Sound, and get to the west of Greenland. This attempt, however, only brought us to within forty miles of the land, where a close line of ice hemmed it in. It was quite impossible to attain our wish in any fashion, so we steamed slowly along without the prescribed limit.

A bear was seen wandering aimlessly about the ice. We burnt some bones in the cook's fire, which it instantly scented and replied to by shambling towards us. I had the pleasure of shooting it, and it rewarded me with a good skin.

Great flocks of smaller gulliemots—little auks, the sailors call them—swept past us to their feeding grounds, and when we "lay to" in an open stretch, they surrounded

the ship like bees round a hive, making a purring sort of noise very pleasant to listen to, and carrying a small wave of water before them as they dived, and scrambled, and flapped their little fin-like wings.

The captain brought out his shot-gun and killed three score of them with a few discharges. We picked them up in a boat, and when skinned, stewed, and made into a pie, these little birds proved a great delicacy. And remember, reader, that I was not starved. When we left Scotland we took with us a bullock, a pig, and a sheep. They were braced to the masts, where they froze, and for five months supplied the cabin with fresh meat.

Until the end of August we sailed hither and thither in a fruitless search for whalebone, and then, as night showed symptoms of approaching, and bay-ice was already forming, the captain took the alarm and ordered "full speed ahead."

And, truly, it was not too soon, for the eager Frost King was only waiting for the sinking of the sun to breathe on the sea and close the gates for nine long months.

But in time—though only just in time—we reached the open sea, and then, with all sail set to a favouring breeze, and the engines at "full speed," we rushed from the solitudes of snow and ice to the shores of our own loved isle, forgetting the pleasures of the past in the thoughts of the future, in the joyful expectation of a glad reunion with the dear ones we had left behind.

### A FURNISHED HOUSE.

IT IS becoming every year more the fashion for sportsmen out for a holiday to entertain the less fortunate portion of the human race, which is forced to sport vicariously, with narratives of their prowess and adventures. Formerly it was held seemly to keep silence unless a man should be in a position to tell how he had shot bears in the Rockies, or musk-oxen in Canada, or alligators in Queensland, or done some sporting deed of like importance; but nowadays, when picturesqueness or eccentricity of style looms so large as a factor in every sort of screech, the slaughter of ten brace of partridges by Johnson in East Anglia, or the capture of a dozen trout by Thompson in a Highland loch, are held to be pegs substantial enough whereon to hang a sporting article, more or less weighty; Thompson and Johnson, be it observed, being fully

persuaded that they have a style at command which would be capable of illuminating a theme much denser and less attractive.

There is another form of sport much affected every summer by respectable middle-class men, fathers of families, who could no more handle a rod or a gun than they could navigate the Channel fleet, and this is the hunt for that furnished house in the country, in which they may spend their six weeks or two months of holiday, having had enough for the present of the humours of English watering-places, and of Scotch and Continental routes of organised travel. When once it has been settled in the family council that "country house" is the watchword for the coming summer, the agent's list is sent for, and the first perusal of this is a veritable peep into a paradise of rural joys.

In reading the detailed excellencies of the various houses in the market, one is brought to a mental state something like that of a cat in a tripe shop: one does not know which tempting treasure to fix upon. As one runs the eye over the varied benefits which are offered in exchange for the stipulated number of guineas per week, one is amazed that the lucky owners of all these good things can bring themselves to part with them, for mere lucre, to alien Londoners. How can the possessors of shady tennis lawns, well-matured grounds, productive kitchen gardens, and cows and fowls in full profit, make up their minds to abjure the enjoyment of them at the season when life in the country—given fine weather—is a dream of lazy beatitude, and betake themselves to join the travelling ruck in foreign lands, or, worse still, to spend weary days in a fly-blown lodging-house on the shadeless sea-front of an English watering-place?

It is not until the sportsman paterfamilias sets forth some fine morning with a selection of "orders to view" in his pocket, that he will realise that the quarry he is in search of is one not to be stalked at the first attempt. Of all the descriptions he has read, there is not one which has taken his fancy so strongly as that of the Limes, and thither accordingly he first turns his steps.

"Dear me, can this be the Limes?" he exclaims, as he runs through a rickety entrance gateway, down a weed-grown drive, and finally stops before a blistered, weather-stained house, fronted by a lawn



which might have been cut the week before last, and littered with the whole summer's débris. The house, though old in design, is new in construction, and is one of those ill-starred ones built with unseasoned timber and untempered mortar. No present care would ever make it cosy, nor would it ever grow venerable by lapse of time. But the owner, as he takes you round, assures you that it is one of the most comfortable houses in England; that he has let it to the same family for four years in succession. The tennis lawn merely wants a little rolling, and though you have to stand on the gravel path to serve, and may be driven occasionally into the potato ground to reach a ball placed well back, there are very few tennis courts in that part of the country to compare with it. The cows, unluckily, are both gone dry, but the produce of the poultry will be yours on condition that you provide the food, a contract which will probably yield you but moderate profit, seeing that the yard is filled chiefly with long-legged young cockerels, who look as if they might be gifted with healthy appetites.

The early potatoes and the peas are almost finished, and the apples, the only other garden produce visible, are of an uncompromising greenish hue, and look as if they might be fit for use some time next spring. You are naturally a little disappointed that, in the event of your taking the place, you will still need the services of the greengrocer, but the proprietor, by way of consolation, waves his hand benignantly over a dozen gooseberry and currant bushes, innocent of the tiniest berry, and assures you that all the bush fruit on the place will be yours.

The hunter will come across Poplars, and Elms, and Cedars, all first cousins to the Limes, and he will soon come to the conclusion that the compilers of house agents' lists are past masters in the art of ingeniously misrepresenting. I have gone through it all myself, and, moreover, I have before this been beguiled into hiring a house which I knew was an imposture, and suffering the penalties due to my folly. But this year I have fallen upon my feet, and have secured the very place I want at a moderate rent, a place which turns out to be more desirable even than its owner declared. My friends, as a rule, assert I am the luckiest of mortals to have got hold of such a treasure; but in spite of this, as I sit after breakfast—that meal, I must mention, was graced with eggs and straw-

berries and cream, all produced on the domain—under the verandah, and gaze over the gay, sunlit garden, I feel that the pursuit of content in a furnished house is an unavailing one. If a serpent has crept into this paradise, whither shall I flee? Will it not be better to retire to the back regions of my house in — Street, and take my holiday in shirt-sleeves and carpet slippers, saving meantime the wages of the caretaker?

In outward seeming my present trouble might well be set down as a chimera. Seeing that the proprietor was most anxious to secure me as a tenant, that I have paid half my rent in advance, and am under legal obligation to pay the balance before vacating my temporary abode; seeing that I consume only such amount of garden stuff as I require for my own household, and never send off surreptitious baskets of it to my gardenless friends in town—a practice not uncommon, I am told, with people in my present case—and that, speaking generally, I and all my belongings are fully as careful of my landlord's goods and chattels as we are of our own, I do not suppose there can be any special reason why I should liken myself to the cuckoo in the song-bird's nest; but free as I may be in spirit of the felonious attributes of the "blithe new-comer," I cannot shake off the notion that, taken literally, I am in my present surroundings just as arrant an intruder as he is, a harmless, law-abiding intruder if you will, but an intruder all the same.

My present landlord has never let his house before, consequently both he himself and the furniture around me are new to the business, hence probably the satisfactory nature of my hire. As I have already hinted, I have had large experience of furnished houses, and how one feels as the dweller in another man's nest. This experience has led me to formulate a belief as to the sentience and individuality of articles of furniture which come into most immediate contact with their owners; not going so far, however, as to elevate them to the dignity of transmitters of communications from another sphere. Somehow this fancy has never struck me so strongly as in my present surroundings, and I have an uneasy suspicion that I may be forcing my company where I am not wanted, a suspicion which has never troubled me when I have been surrounded by what I may call professional furniture, the furniture one meets in hotels, or lodging-houses,

or in those south country rectories and vicarages which of late have come so largely into competition with the above. All of this, from the base usage to which it has been put for so many seasons, must differ entirely from the furniture of a well-ordered home, like that which I now see around me, just as the waiter and the job-horse differ from their congeners in private service. They must deteriorate morally before the nap has lost its first freshness, or the varnish been defaced by a single scratch.

The first evening of my sojourn here, impressed no doubt by the spirit of the surroundings, I put myself in my landlord's place, and conjured up the vision of some other man sitting in my own easy-chair, and walking over my own Oriental rugs. I felt that my cherished belongings would take it as an injury. I credited them forthwith with faculties such as no weaver or cabinet-maker could ever have put into them, making them thus participants, in a measure, in my own idiosyncrasies. I take it that most men manage to impress marks of their own individuality on their immediate surroundings, and I often wonder how it is that those curious investigators in the byways of being have not set to work to describe character, or even to foretell the future, from the aspect of a man's household belongings. Commonplace people would say that the data here available are just as trustworthy as those supplied by the bumps on his head or the creases in the palms of his hand.

I have no personal knowledge of my landlord or of any of his family, but after a fortnight spent in their home, I seem to know them indirectly. To judge from his title, the head of the house may have seen active service as a man of arms in past years; and the trim neatness of the place, outside and in, proclaims that he must have been a smart officer, and brought his orderly tastes into retirement. The house is well furnished, but there are no superfluities, as if the idea of having to strike tents in a hurry and move on to fresh ground had always been present.

The pictures on the walls of the Captain's snuggerly balanced each other perfectly; his writing-table, when I first sat down to it, was a model of neatness, and, though, since I have been here I have done my best to provoke around me the litter which at home follows my advent in any part of the house as surely as dawn

follows sunset, I cannot manage it. I may put the Captain's inkstand and his paper-weights away, and shift every chair out of its allotted place, but they do not on this account produce an effect of natural disarray. My own surroundings have grown by long usage hopelessly demoralised and down at heel, and seem to delight in their disrespectability, but the Captain's household effects rather resemble respectable middle-aged gentlemen constrained to put on raffish Bohemian ways of which they thoroughly disapprove. There is a mute reproach in their involuntary disorder which I cannot bear. It disturbs me more even than the prim symmetry in which I found them, and to which they are evidently pining to return; so I restore them to their well-balanced rectangular alignment, and sit straight in their midst as if I were the Captain himself, and even fancy that I am, *pro tem.*, endowed with a certain military stiffness.

But it is not in the Captain's snuggerly that I feel most like a cuckoo. There is a tiny apartment, half bower, half conservatory, at the end of the house, and in this I have more than once attempted to smoke my after-lunch pipe, and to spend over a novel what is in an ordinary way the pleasantest hour in the whole four-and-twenty, but I felt that every whiff I blew out was an outrage, though my landlord had bidden me to smoke wherever I would, as he did himself; indeed, the first time I entered it I certainly did smell tobacco, but I could not bring myself to intensify this aroma, even by the choicest Egyptian.

Delicate water-colours and etchings hung on the walls, and ornaments and nick-nacks of the prettiest stood about everywhere. Since I have been in residence, hints have come to my ears that the Captain was induced by the "*res angusta*"—taking the form of the cessation of Irish rents—to let his house this summer, and now as I look round at this pretty little boudoir, furnished with such care and good taste for his wife and the charming bevy of girls whose photographs at various stages of growth adorn the walls, I realise what a pang it must have been to them all to turn out of this pretty home, just at the season when it was best worth living in, and feel that I was acting the part of a niggardly brute when I delivered my ultimatum to the agent, and declared I must have the Captain's domain for pounds instead of guineas.

I should not like to turn over my study with its well-worn furniture, its engravings and drawings, which are valuable rather from association than from any inherent merit, and its modest assortment of books, including certain rare first editions and volumes out of print, to any stranger for whose respectability I had no better guarantee than the Captain has for mine; but this would be a light sacrifice compared with the one which must have been made with respect to the little boudoir. To have to let such an apartment for hire seems almost as great a domestic tragedy as having to sell the odds and ends from the old home, or one's school and college prizes.

I find I am becoming somewhat sentimental and inclined to moral on the times, so I take my hat and stroll out into the garden by way of seeking a fresh subject for meditation; but whichever way I turn, I meet fresh proofs and warnings that I am an intrusive presence. I see the gardener bound for the kitchen with a basket of prime potatoes, the seed of which, I believe, my Cincinnatus landlord planted with his own hand. I hear the suggestive cackling of the hens; and, regardless of the parasites I may acquire, I go and search for the morning's eggs; and, as I issue forth with a dozen or so lovely ones, I feel my cuckoo status still more acutely. I am half inclined to invite the Captain and all his family to come and stay with us for the rest of our term, so as to lessen the feeling that I am consuming a heritage in which I have no just part.

At the present time I regard the Captain as the victim of the cruellest of fates. Had I once succeeded in raising a potato, or in nurturing a hen to the egg-laying stage, I should have felt ruin itself little worse than the abandonment of these home-grown delicacies to a stranger. I only hope that I may be in as charitable a mood towards the Captain after our final account has been adjusted.

My friend Thompson who was here last week gave me some details of his own experience of taking furnished houses which were, to put it moderately, a little disquieting: stories of whole closets full of cracked plates and cups produced at the last moment as candidates for compensation, of cupboard doors gone slightly wrong and necessitating a builder's estimate to put them straight, and of grease spots on every carpet and rug in the house. According to

Thompson, those hires which begin well are almost sure to end badly. He declares, too, that my conception of the Captain is entirely ideal, and that most likely I shall have to settle a bill for dilapidations which will astonish me. Thompson has given up taking furnished houses, and prefers to stay with people who do. He goes on to say that, whenever he is compelled to entertain himself, he finds it more economical to engage a first-floor suite of rooms in the grandest of seaside grand hotels. But Thompson always was a pessimist.

## THE ETERNAL PAST.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER IV.

"WELL, I can live as long as I like with an easy conscience now you are provided for," said Mrs. Deane.

"Please be pleased for a better reason."

"I am pleased for a great many reasons. You have proved yourself a success, that's one. All your people and mine had set you down for an old maid, and we shall have the laugh over them—that's another."

Hilary winced; she would rather have ignored these reasons.

"But you like him?" she said.

"Of course, who wouldn't? He is such a handsome, well-bred young man. He will always be a credit to us. He looks so clean, and well-groomed, and young."

They were breakfasting in the garden as usual. The gate clicked, and Charlie came down the path. He looked as if he had come on purpose to emphasize Mrs. Deane's description of him. The old woman's face glowed with pleasure at the sight of him.

"Dear boy! Hilary, you're a lucky girl, and I'm overjoyed," she said. "Shall I go in? Will he want to kiss you?"

Hilary was appeased. The heart of the hardest, bitterest old woman—cold as stone to her own sex—will warm and soften over the love of a beautiful boy. Hilary was glad to find how content she was that her grandmother's sympathy should waken more for Charlie than it had done for herself.

"Don't go in till he has told you formally," she said. "He will wait for that, he is so well-behaved."

But she was mistaken; he kissed her in the presence of Mrs. Deane—with a

gorgeous air of matter-of-fact right—and Hilary found this kiss even pleasanter than the soft kisses of the night before. There was so much proprietorship in it—it made her feel a child—and she was glad to belong to him. No one had cared to appropriate her for so long.

"She has told you, of course?" Charlie was saying to Mrs. Deane.

"She was just telling me," the old lady answered, with frank delight in his young self-possession. "You might have waited till you had my consent before you took such absolute possession of my grandchild, don't you think?"

"Why, you knew all the while, didn't you?" he asked innocently. "I thought you did, you know. You helped me so nicely." Then, as the old lady just looked in his handsome face and laughed, he added: "I was so much obliged to you."

He sat down at the breakfast-table beside Hilary, and went on talking. He wanted to make plans, and there wasn't much time for making them. He wanted Mrs. Deane and Hilary to go to Algiers for the winter; that would be such a charming arrangement. They were going abroad, in any case. Why not to Algiers? He was bound to go there himself, and he couldn't possibly go without Hilary. He was sure Mrs. Deane would like Algiers.

Mrs. Deane said she would do whatever the young people liked, and left them to settle their plans together.

"How nice she is," said Charlie, pulling his chair a little further into the sunshine. "You won't mind coming to Algiers, Hilary?"

"I think I shall like it."

"I want you to see my mother. You won't mind going to her, will you? She couldn't come to you, because she doesn't like England in the winter; and winter is pretty near now."

"It would be rather far for her to come to pay a call. Besides, it is quite right that I should go to her."

"I didn't know but what you might want to stand on your dignity. Most girls think a mother-in-law a natural enemy. Nan does. Joe's mother wrote to her, and talked about 'my son's choice.' Nan said it made her feel as if all the girls had knelt in a ring, and Joe had stood in the middle and looked round, and beckoned to her, and she had got up and rushed at him. You must not feel like that with my mother. You need not

stand on your dignity with her. She is charming. You will love her."

"You are like your mother, are you not?"

"Yes," he said, flushing a little. "More like than the rest—in appearance, that is. She is very gentle and unselfish. I am afraid we all bully her sometimes, we are such healthy brutes. You will get on with her."

"I am sure I shall," she said, and she was sure of it because she knew that though a good and wise mother often idealises a worthless son, a good boy's belief in his mother is never misleading—knowing him you can almost know her. "I shall love her very much," Hilary continued. "I wish I were as sure that she would love me."

"Oh, she will, I know."

"I hope so."

"Of course she will. Why not?"

If Hilary had spoken the truth she would have said: "Because she will see through me, Catrin's natural remedies, my own pretence of lightheartedness, and all. She will know I am old and sad, and that you are not my first love. Every mother likes a very young girl for her son's wife. Some one who will be his devotee rather than his friend. She is less of a rival."

"Your mother has always loved you more than all the others," she said. "You are her dearest treasure."

"That is why she will love you," he said simply. "I am so glad you are not too proud to go to her, because I would not go if you didn't, and she expects me. You don't mind, do you, that I am so anxious not to disappoint her? I will write to-day and say that we are going out together."

"Here are your sisters," said Hilary.

"They are come to tell you how pleased they are. I told them last night."

And he went off to write his letter.

The girls were pleased, or at any rate sympathetic. Their very praises of their brother sounded more like tribute to her good taste than the traditional exhortation to "be worthy." They hoped she would not mind spending the winters in Algiers. Charlie always went because of mother. "Charlie is mother's favourite, you know. He is the only one of us who takes after her. He is the only one who reads, or thinks, or talks to mother about the things she cares for. If one of us went to her instead of him she would be pleased at

the attention, but she wouldn't enjoy the visit."

"Still, it would be hard on Hilary to give up the season every year."

"Should we have had any season if we didn't go to Algiers?" asked Hilary, laughing.

"Oh, yes, when you are married. Didn't you know that Charles was rich—rich compared to the rest of us, that is?"

"No, I didn't know that."

"Well, don't look so disappointed, but he is. He had money left him. That's how he and mother can afford to live in Algiers. We couldn't all afford to idle through the whole winter. We go in turns. Nan would have gone this year if she hadn't been engaged, but mother likes Charles best."

"I think you have been quite wise, though Charles is my brother," said Nan. "I don't approve of marrying, myself—I did my best to keep out of it—but I was so idiotically gone on Joe; and I must say Charles is quite as good an excuse for marriage as Joe—he is so young and full of life, and has such pretty ways. It is nice, too, to have one's man well off—Joe and I will have to go for our honeymoon third class."

Where was the grudging spirit, the carping, her narrow bringing-up had taught her to expect? These dear girls were all looking at the matter entirely from her point of view because she too was a girl. It was all very pleasant.

They chattered away the whole morning. In the afternoon the men joined them, and they all went for a walk together. They met the party of the night before and exchanged a word or two. The strangers had heard of the new engagement. Perhaps Beckwith had mentioned it, or the landladies assumed it.

They offered congratulations—rather more frank than were in good taste from such strangers. Charlie was not in the least embarrassed. He looked manly and dignified. Hilary was very proud of him. The little woman with the small mouth said bitter things about marriage. Beckwith said nothing.

When she went to bed that night Hilary found a letter in her room. It had just been sent by hand. The writing was Beckwith's. She opened it impatiently, vexed that her pleasanter thoughts should be interrupted.

The letter rushed straight into its subject without formal address, either because

Beckwith knew he must not say Hilary and would not say Miss Deane, or through his inveterate tendency towards the dramatic.

"If you had told me nothing, I should have guessed all from your face this afternoon. From my heart I rejoice that you are happy, and so the wrong I did you has ceased to exist. It is curiously just that we should meet just at the time of your triumph and my trouble. I do not say it was not hard for me to see another man take the place that was once mine, but I do not complain. It is fit that I, who made one good woman suffer, should suffer myself through another good woman, but I do not complain. I would not have it otherwise. You said last night that you had not forgiven me. Surely you can forgive me now 'you are comforted, and I am tormented.'"

Hilary tossed the letter on the toilet-table, laughing. "Poor Teddy," she said, as she began to take down her hair and brush it, and anoint it with one of Catrin's "natural remedies." "Poor Teddy, just the same as ever, and to think this sort of thing once impressed me, filled me with reverence—a sort of sacred shame that I should be chosen by fate as his comforter! Poor Teddy," and she laughed again.

A little later she flung aside her brushes, caught up the letter, and threw herself on the bed, crying; but she was not crying over the letter; she was crying because the letter had made her laugh.

#### CHAPTER V.

It was spring again, and a warm day. Hilary Deane, in a black frock, leaned against the gate of a little country churchyard. Just the same Hilary as she was last year; her hair was a little brighter in colour perhaps, and the spring mode of dressing it was even more becoming to her than that of the previous autumn had been—that was all the change. She leaned against the wall, looking at the hill she would have to climb to reach home half impatiently.

Presently Mr. Beckwith came along the road; he was walking quickly and unsteadily with his hat drawn over his eyes. When he saw Hilary he stopped short.

He stared at her for a moment as if he were not quite sure whether she were really there, or whether his own feeling of the fitness of things had called up a vision of her.

"You are here," he said at last. "That is as it should be again."

"Of course I am here," she said, as surprised as he was, but more indifferent. "And you?"

"The Suttons have come to their house here for the summer."

"And she is with them? And that would bring you still?" she said.

"It would have brought me," he answered passionately, "while my life lasted. Whatever I am—whatever I have been to others—in this matter I was true. Have you heard—in the village——"

"No, we are not in the way of hearing things. What has happened?"

"You don't know?"

"No; is there anything to know?"

He flushed, and pushed his hat back, hesitating.

"It will seem less terrible, and I look less ridiculous, if I tell you myself, and you are sure to hear it," he said. "You remember what I said last year, how curiously just it was that we should meet then; it is even more just that we should meet now—that I should tell you this myself. You remember that woman——"

"Mrs. Sutton's friend, whom you pointed out to me?"

"You remember how I thought of her; how I suffered at the insults put upon her; the degradation she suffered from contact with her husband—with her husband's friends?"

"I remember one friend. The man you said should not be allowed to live in the same hemisphere."

"She went away with him last night. I am perhaps the only one who did not know what was going on as long ago as last year. You are laughing."

"How can one help laughing? It is such an amusing world."

"And you and I have had such a good time in it."

They both leaned silently against the wall, thinking. Hilary was the first to speak:

"It is all so very conventional; there is something so very commonplace about poetic justice."

He thought over that a little before he answered:

"You at least are happy now."

"Oh, no, I am only just beginning to know just how unhappy I am."

"Are you married yet, or when will it be?"

She drew her eyebrows together, and looked at him, surprised.

"Ah, you do not know? Of course not—you have been too much occupied—but, do you not see where I am? Do you not understand that—and this?"

She made a little gesture towards a new grave just within the churchyard, and then towards her black frock. Beckwith did understand; he turned very white with honest sympathy, and laid his hand on hers; she did not even notice him.

"It did not take one altogether by surprise," she went on. "When I met his mother I seemed to know—to understand what those great strong brothers and sisters meant by saying that he was like her, and why they were always praising his goodness in going every winter to Algiers to his mother, and they did not want to admit the truth even to themselves. When I saw his mother—I knew—I saw the likeness. We stayed there during the winter—she talked of coming to England, but we left her there. He did not seem to get over it. There was one cold night travelling—we began to be anxious—we got nearly home first—then we brought him here. This is his native village, you know. His sisters came for the funeral, two of them are married—they have gone now; grandmother and I go away this evening, that is why I came here this afternoon."

She ended as she had begun—dully and without emotion. All the while she spoke the wind had been blowing the scent of violets and narcissus from the grave towards them. Beckwith's eyes were full of tears.

"Hilary!" he said gently, "I am more sorry for your trouble than you are for mine."

"This isn't a trouble at all."

Her voice was hard, and there were no signs of tears on her face. She was looking at him almost vindictively.

"That is what I cannot forgive you. My lover is dead, and I do not care very much. How can you expect me to forgive you such a wrong as that? Last year, after I had seen you, I thought it would be possible for me to marry him, and make him happy; but I was not happy; I was afraid his mother would think me too old and sad for her son. She would have thought so if she had not known how little it would matter to him what I was like. She was sorry for me because she saw what was coming, and I had to

pretend to be more anxious than I was because I was ashamed of my hard heart. I didn't love him, I didn't love him, and if he had lived he would have found me out. Can I forgive you that? And now when all his bright life and pleasant ways, and his love for me, is shut in and stamped down under that, and I have laid flowers there because it was expected of me, still, I do not care very much. Can I forgive you that?"

"I am sorry, Hilary—I am very sorry."

"What is the good of that now?"

"Nothing, I know. I wish I had acted differently; I wish we had both died—that evening—long ago—in the garden."

"Of course you do. That is the right thing to wish at this crisis. Naturally you would wish it."

"I wish it with all my heart. If one could only foresee. It seemed such a pretty incident then. I can see the starlight, smell the grasses——"

"No," she said roughly, "it is the flowers on that boy's grave you smell."

"Don't, Hilary. I am afraid of you. My girl, how bitter you are. Don't you believe that I am punished?"

"It makes such a little difference whether you are punished or not."

"If there were anything I could say or do."

"But there is nothing. I have sometimes thought, when I felt saddest, that if Heaven itself were to give you into my hands, body and soul, for me to take what vengeance on you I would, I should not have cared for vengeance, because no suffering on your part could give me back what I lost when I lost faith in you."

"Hilary, I loved you, I loved you really."

"I think you did then—for a day or two."

"I had no idea it would be so serious for you."

"I was foolish; that, of course, is your quarrel against me. I took things seriously.

You must remember I was very young, so I believed in you."

"Age has not made me wise. The men in town are laughing over my blindness and folly."

"Don't grudge them their laughter if it is any pleasure to them. The people in the village are pitying me. I don't see why they should not."

They both stood silent again, each thinking their own thoughts.

"Did he know about me?" Beckwith asked presently.

"No. I was too ashamed of the incident ever to mention it, especially after he had seen you. He had such a poor opinion of you. I did not like to tell him I had loved you."

"You did love me once, Hilary."

"Oh, yes," and she laughed. "I have never got over it, as you see."

"What are you going to do next?" he asked.

"Go on living, there is nothing else to do."

"Back among your own people?"

"Oh, no, that would be intolerable."

"Yes, and my old life would be intolerable to me."

Then there was another long silence. When he looked up it was with the impatience of one speaking a necessary platitude.

"We ought to be married, Hilary—I really see nothing else for us."

"It is the obvious ending of a story such as ours," she said. "Circumstances exact it of us. We shall not be happy, you know."

He looked a moment at her improved face and figure.

"I am not so sure of that," he said almost tenderly.

She laughed quite heartily.

"Of course we shall be happy," she said.

"My grandmother will be very pleased. She was most anxious for me to be married, you know, and as for you, think how pleasant it will be for you to have a wife who understands you as well as I do."

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### CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
A Valiant Ignorance. A Serial		Through the Ranks. A Serial	
Story ... 121, 145, 169, 193, 217		Story ... .. 217	
A Drive in Italy. In Two		Honourable Intentions. A	
Parts ... .. 125, 159		Complete Story ... .. 187	
Prefaces ... .. 132		Fairy Tales ... .. 198	
Some Old Dramatic Difficulties	135	The Question. A Poem ... .. 203	
Trying our Wings. A Complete		At Cross Purposes. A Complete	
Story ... .. 138		Story ... .. 204	
Imperial Dinners.—II... .. 151		The Brecknock Beacons ... .. 207	
Alone. A Poem ... .. 156		"A Red-faced Nixon" ... .. 210	
On Going Slow ... .. 156		White Lilac. A Story in Four	
An Irish Judicial Joker ... .. 164		Chapters ... .. 212, 235	
The Old Portsmouth Road ... .. 172		Across a Corner in Essex ... .. 220	
The Telautograph ... .. 177		Polly. A Complete Story ... .. 226	
A Day as a Hop-picker ... .. 180		From Minuet to Skirt-Dancing	230
The Wealden Ironworks ... .. 184		Gateways ... .. 233	

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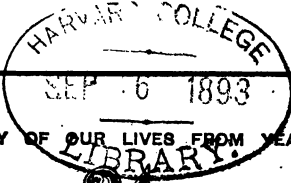
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## A Weekly Journal

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NO. 240.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XL.

OVER the country about Henley, that same day, the sun was shining gloriously.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and there was a clearness about the light, a distinctness about the shadows, which, taken in conjunction with the sun would presently sink, argued coming rain. For the present, however, nature was lovely to look at; and a garden-party which was going on in the large, old-fashioned garden of a large, old-fashioned country house, about a mile from the river, had the benefit of every advantage which atmosphere and surroundings could give.

It was a large party, and the scene was very bright and animated. On the larger of the two lawns, conspicuous among the well-dressed but by no means striking-looking women about her, stood Mrs. Romaine, talking to a local magnate.

She had arrived about half an hour before, and the politely concealed satisfaction and surprise with which she had been received had testified to the fact that her appearance at such a function was a phenomenon in the neighbourhood. Invitations had showered in on her during her residence at the "cottage," but it had gradually become an established fact that she was "going out very little." This was in truth the first party she had attended. It was fortunate that her hostess was not a particularly observant person. There had been something about Mrs. Romaine

when she arrived which might have dashed that hostess's personal elation with a suspicion that her guest's appearance had been dictated by motives not wholly complimentary to the party; faint lines about the mouth which suggested the enforced endurance of a burden from which she was seeking temporary relief however fictitious; a faint restlessness in the eyes which suggested an attempt at the eluding of the too insistent companionship of her own thoughts.

Her eyes were painfully bright, and there was a nervous tensiety about the vivacity of her face as she stood there on the lawn talking and laughing. But her companion of the moment—a worthy old gentleman, with not much acquaintance among women of the world—thought her simply the most astonishingly charming woman he had ever met; and seeking in his mind for lines on which to make himself agreeable to her, he recollected to have heard something about her son.

"You have a son here, I believe?" he said with ponderous interest. "I should greatly like to make his acquaintance."

Mrs. Romaine laughed.

"I have a son," she said, "but he is not here, I'm sorry to say. He is hard at work just at present. Ah!" she broke off with an exclamation of surprise. "I see a friend of mine over there! I must go and speak to her." And with a bow and a smile to her admirer, she broke off the tête-à-tête which had, perhaps, seemed longer to one party than to the other, and moved across the lawn to where Hilda Compton was standing watching her with an uncertain but not particularly pleasant expression on her pretty face.

"Are you staying in the neighbourhood?" said Mrs. Romaine prettily, when



they had shaken hands. She was apparently entirely oblivious of something cold and disagreeable in the younger woman's manner. "Is your husband here?"

Hilda Compton glanced at her with a certain tentative triumph in her eyes.

"No!" she said. "He's not here. I'm staying on a house-boat, but he is kept in town over some troublesome business!"

She paused, and then, as Mrs. Romaine made a rather patronising gesture of sympathy, that gleam of triumph strengthened into something distinctly malicious. Hilda Compton had never forgotten or forgiven that moment in the Norfolk garden twelve months ago. It had been no part of her policy to resent it when such resentment must necessarily have rebounded to her own disadvantage; she had accepted Mrs. Romaine's society friendliness during the past season with just such a manner as might sting but could not, in very self-respect, be impugned by the elder woman; a manner cleverly tinged with that deference which points the sense of superiority with which certain types of girl recognise the fact that the present is to them, and not to the previous generation. But she had hoped always that the day might come when she would find herself in a position to take more active measures, and she felt now that even what she knew to be a slight breach of conjugal faith would be venial if it would straighten what she would have called her "score" against Julian Romaine's mother.

"Yes, it's rather a bore!" she said. "City business, you know! Don't you think it's very foolish of men to speculate, Mrs. Romaine? Of course I haven't a quarter of your experience, but I think so. They always seem to get into trouble of some sort! But you know more than I do about this affair, no doubt, since Mr. Romaine is mixed up in it, and he's such a devoted son. Husbands don't tell one much, I find!"

Self-command is a wonderful thing, even when it originates in no higher motive than the instinct of a woman of the world for the retention of her society demeanour. Mrs. Romaine's lips were ashen and her fingers were clenched round the sunshade she held until her rings cut into them, but she faced Hilda Compton steadily, and with a mechanical smile, her eyes, a little dull and contracted, meeting the girl's pretty, unfeeling ones. Hilda Compton noticed the change of colour even behind

the artificial tinting, and rejoiced at the slip of the tongue by which her foolish young husband had put such a weapon into her hand. If only she had succeeded in making Howard tell her more, instead of making him lose his temper! She reflected, however, that perhaps the truth was not so very bad after all, and hints might possibly sound worse than the actual facts.

"Do tell Mr. Romaine, from me, that I hope he hasn't done anything very shocking!" she said, with a laugh. "I wanted Howard to tell me just what it was, but he would not. Isn't it funny how men seem to lose their heads altogether when they get on to that silly Stock Exchange? The last man one would expect, too! Who would have thought of Mr. Romaine's getting into trouble that of kind?"

Somewhat to her disgust, Hilda Compton found as she proceeded that it was impossible to give such significance to her words as she would have wished. She realised that it would never do to allow herself to be brought to book, and consequently conventionality demanded that she should adopt a jesting tone, and trust to Mrs. Romaine's possessing some half knowledge which should give the words the barb she wished for them. She had a pleasant conviction that she had done something at last towards wiping out that old score as Mrs. Romaine answered her. The words were preceded by a harsh little laugh, and there was something indistinct about their utterance.

"Just so. Who would have thought——"

Mrs. Romaine stopped abruptly, and a sharp, extraordinary spasm passed across her face, leaving it haggard, fixed, and old.

The girl by her side could not flatter herself that the effect was produced by her words, for Mrs. Romaine was gazing to the other side of the garden, and it was evidently something she had seen there which had affected her so powerfully. Turning her own curious eyes in the same direction, Hilda Compton saw nothing calculated to account for such an effect. The crowd had drifted away to some extent to the other lawn and the tennis-courts, and there was a considerable space, sparsely sprinkled with people, between where they stood and the last group on the lawn; a group of ladies to whom the host was introducing a little alert, elderly man with grey hair; a little man who looked to-day—though only one pair of

the two pair of women's eyes fixed upon him across the lawn recognised this—exactly as he had looked twenty years ago.

Hilda Compton did not know him, and she was wondering curiously whether Mrs. Romaine did, when she heard their hostess's voice and turned quickly. Mrs. Romaine, roused apparently by finding herself addressed, had turned also—very quickly it seemed to Hilda Compton, and rather as though she did not wish her face to be seen by some one on the other side of the garden—and was listening with a dazed, strained expression of enforced attention.

"I want to introduce a connexion of mine, my dear Mrs. Romaine. Something of a traveller, and something of an eccentricity; but, really, worth talking to. There he is!" indicating the little alert, elderly man on the other side of the lawn. "He is a Dr. Aston. May I fetch him?"

To Hilda Compton's astonishment Mrs. Romaine stretched out her hand hurriedly in unmistakable dissent, and it was shaking like a leaf.

"I'm afraid I must say 'no,'" she said, in a hoarse, hurried tone which sounded as though she could hardly control it. "I have a long drive, you know, and I must run away."

She made her adieus so briefly and hurriedly that her hostess came to the conclusion that illness must be the cause of the seclusion in which she was living, and that she must have miscalculated her strength that afternoon.

She might have thought so with even more reason if she had seen the strange collapse of her whole figure with which Mrs. Romaine sank back into the corner of her carriage as she was driven home along the country roads. If her attendance at the garden-party had been indeed a desperate attempt on her part at finding some sort of temporary oblivion or distraction, that attempt had obviously failed. Her face was drawn and set, and in her eyes, as they stared unseeingly before her, there was a look as of a woman who is quivering still under the influence of some horrible shock.

She had, as she had said, a long drive home, and as she neared her own house that look in her eyes faded, displaced by a sick hunger of anxiety. She got out of the carriage quickly, helping herself a good deal as she rose, however, as if that shock had affected her physical strength.

"Has Mr. Julian come?" she said to the servant who opened the door; then as the woman answered in the negative, she moved swiftly on to where her letters lay waiting for her, and looked them rapidly over. There was none from Julian, and she carried them listlessly upstairs as she went to dress for her solitary dinner.

The rain, which was falling fast by this time in London, was just beginning to patter slowly on the window when she came into the dining-room; and the wind was rising and moving gustily round the house. They were dreary sounds, both of them, and Mrs. Romaine shivered a little as she sat down. Apparently the monotonous pattering, growing quicker and quicker as dinner went on, or the low howling of the wind, made her nervous. She ate nothing, and when at last, the form of dinner having been gone through with and the servant having left the room, she rose and walked aimlessly to the fireplace, her lips were strangely compressed, and she seemed to control the expression of her eyes with a determined effort. It was as though she were controlling something within of which the tendency frightened her. She stood there forgetting, apparently, to go into the drawing-room, her face sharp and intent as though she were reasoning or arguing with herself. At last she shivered sharply and her lips twitched. Then rousing herself forcibly, as it seemed, she rang the bell fiercely, and gave orders that a fire should be lighted in the drawing-room. It was a wretched evening, she said to the servant, as though the audible expression of a tangible reason for the nervous discomfort which seemed to be upon her was some sort of relief to her. The fire lighted, she drew a chair in front of it, and taking up a novel, set herself to read with a desperate determination in every line of her face.

Down one page, line by line, on through the next, still line by line, her eyes travelled steadily, mechanically; and then as mechanically her hand moved, turned the leaf, and her eyes moved on again. But unless her face greatly belied her the sense of the words she read so intently never penetrated to her brain. By-and-by that movement of her eyes ceased; she sat staring fixedly at the page before her; then she let the hand that held the book sink gradually on her knee and sat staring into space as she had sat staring at the printed words. Her face was drawn, and there was an intense, indefinite

dread about it which was none the less ghastly in that it would have been impossible to say in which of her set features its shadow lurked.

The room was absolutely still. Outside the rain fell and the wind moaned. Inside the intense quiet seemed to be taking a weirdly tangible form, and to be creeping closer and closer round her motionless figure with every breath she drew.

With a sudden, sharp movement, as though in taking a too sharply piercing point her thoughts had roused her to a desperate resistance of them, she rose, and began to walk restlessly up and down the room.

Her brows were drawn to a concentration which made her whole face look thin and very old. There was an expression of deliberate, self-conscious self-contempt about her mouth, but in her eyes there lurked the battling horror against which all her force seemed to be fiercely arrayed. Up and down she walked, no muscle of her set face relaxing until quite suddenly there swept across it, breaking up all its rigid lines, a very agony of yearning. It was as though some sudden and most inopportune realisation, in no wise to be resisted, had shaken her through and through.

"If only I had dared to ask him! If only, if only I dared to speak!"

The words had broken from her half aloud, a sharp, low cry, and as she uttered them she stopped in her walk, gripping and clinging to a chair as if for physical support in a moment of terrible mental conflict. She was evidently fighting desperately inch by inch for the self-control which was slipping from her; the self-control which she dreaded to lose as she dreaded nothing else in life; the self-control to which she clung with the tenacity of instinctive self-preservation.

She lifted her face at last, still and hard as resolution could make it. She crossed the room with quick, resolute steps, looking neither to the right nor the left, and went rapidly upstairs to her own room. A desk containing a quantity of papers stood on the chest of drawers. They were old bills and receipts that needed sorting and destroying, and she had brought them into the country saying that she never had time for such work in town. She went up to this desk now, lifted it in her two hands, and placing it on the table, sat down before it and unlocked it. All her movements were the quick, concentrated move-

ments of a woman to whom employment, close, tedious employment, has become an absolute necessity.

A telegram ten days old was not among the papers to be sorted, but Mrs. Romaine held one in her hand as she sat there at her writing-table. She had drawn it from the front of her dress and she read and reread it, oblivious of the task she had set herself, with an intensity in her eyes which seemed as though it would wring a hidden meaning from the words. It was the telegram Julian had sent her ten days before. She folded it at last with a quick defiant gesture and drew towards her a packet of receipts.

She untied the string that fastened the papers, and out from among them there fell a folded letter, yellow with age, and crumpled. It had evidently worked its way into that packet by accident, as papers will when many are kept together, for it was obviously a letter and not a bill. Mrs. Romaine stretched out her hand mechanically and picked it up and opened it. Her eyes were met by the words written in a childish, scrawling, much blotted handwriting: "My dear mama."

It was the letter which she had received from Julian twenty years ago at Nice.

In an instant, even as her eyes fell on those faded baby characters, so suddenly and so utterly that she never realised her loss, the self-control to which she had clung so fiercely melted away from Mrs. Romaine. Before the flash and quiver of recognition had subsided on her face she had seized the bell rope and was ringing furiously for her maid. The woman appearing breathless and alarmed a moment later found her mistress searching feverishly for bonnet and cloak.

"I am going to London, Dawson. Order the carriage at once."

The voice was harsh, rapid, and peremptory; but the bewildered woman hesitated.

"Now, ma'am?"

Mrs. Romaine turned on her with such a face as her maid had never seen before.

"At once, I said. At once!"

The last train was just steaming into the station when Mrs. Romaine's carriage dashed up, the horse smoking and covered with foam.

She had thrown that yellow little letter half-unconsciously into her pocket, and all through the journey she sat motionless, clasping it tightly in her hand, her eyes

wild, her features forced into a quiescence which sat upon them like a mask.

That mask seemed to get thin, to break away now and again, as she drove through the London streets at last, as though the wild emotion which it hid was growing too strong for it. Her breath was coming faster and faster, until her white, parted lips took an involuntary line of physical pain.

There were no lights in the house in Chelsea as her cab drew up. It was twelve o'clock. She rang violently, and waited, her rapid breathing almost suffocating her. No one came. She rang again, pausing this time with her hand on the bell; again and again furiously, as a wild, unreasoning horror seemed to seize upon her and tear at her heart. At last there was a sound as of the tentative undoing of bolts and turning of keys. The door was opened an inch or two, and a frightened woman's voice said:

"Who is it?"

A moment later there was no possibility of doubt on that score. The door was hurriedly thrown open, and Mrs. Romayne moved swiftly into the hall, turning fiercely to confront the astonished, partially-dressed servant, whose bedroom candle seemed to be the only light in the house.

"Has Mr. Julian gone to bed?" she demanded, and the woman hardly recognised her mistress's voice.

"Mr. Julian is not here, ma'am!" she answered. "He has not been here since the day before yesterday."

## A DRIVE IN ITALY.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

OUR first sense of the brightness and colour of the South came upon us as we emerged from the railway station at Genoa and found ourselves in front of the stately monument to Columbus. The snow had lain deep all over Lombardy, and a blast, the touch of which almost took the skin off one's face, swept through the gaunt white streets of Milan; but on the south side of the Ligurian range nature was in softer mood. Nevertheless the air was quite keen enough when we started on our drive next morning along the coast to Spezia. Our horses were long-legged, wiry brutes, who went up or down hill, or on the level, almost at the same pace. Our driver lashed and yelled at them

apparently from force of habit, for they went neither faster nor slower for his blows and objurgations; and as they galloped up the steep incline going out of Genoa I could but wonder what the German driver, who always refuses to trot up an ascent of one in a thousand, would have said to such coachmanship. However, our own course was not destined to be run at racing speed all the way. On the railway, which follows the same route, there are almost as many level crossings as tunnels, and as the gates of these have to be closed for ten minutes before the coming of a train, there is practically a series of well-nigh permanent blocks set up along the road, for Italian trains, like trains in other countries, are not unnecessarily punctual, and by their delay another ten minutes, and sometimes even half an hour, has to be added to the period ordained by law. By road one enjoys a continued view of the lovely panorama, of which those who travel by train can get only tantalising momentary glances in the minutes of daylight set here and there in the hours of tunnel darkness. Genoa stretches its not very attractive suburbs for some two miles, and as far as Nervi one passes through very little of true country. Villa gardens stand thick on either side; and, though one with a mind attuned to the life of a lodge in the wilderness might resent the too intrusive signs of man's presence, the marvellous accord of greens set out in the mingled foliage of orange, and cypress, and olive, all harmonising perfectly with each other, and with the blue of sea and sky as well, enriches the landscape with a charm which will certainly appeal to ordinary mortals. Looking back from Ruta the whole line of the coast, cape beyond cape, lies before us, with Genoa glittering in the sun in the far distance, and one can now see how thickly the miles of hill-side are set with villas. Such a spectacle suggests a doubt as to whether Italy can be indeed the poor country we are assured she is. Surely these hundreds of "maisons de luxe," kept up no doubt on the profits of traffic in the fruits of the soil, must be taken as a certain set-off against that "miséria" of which one hears so much.

The young ladies of the hotel at Ruta, who did us the honour of serving us a lunch at double the price we paid for a similar meal at the excellent Café Concordia at Genoa, were very anxious to impress upon us the residential advantages of the



place, for they ran over a long list of counts and dukes and marquises who lived round about; but we soon learnt that it would not do to generalise about the economic state of Italy from a cursory glance of the Riviera di Levante.

Beyond Ruta the road becomes less urban. Chiavari, an uninteresting town, straggles over a mile or so of it, but the remainder possesses all the features of normal Italian scenery. The road runs nearer to the sea as we approach Sestri; and after dashing at full whip-cracking speed through labyrinthine streets and alleys, some of them just wide enough to admit the carriage without much margin, we drive up to the Hotel d'Europe.

A traveller ought to be careful not to garnish his narrative too thickly with records of his hotel experiences; but the circumstances of our sojourn here were unconventional enough to allow of an exception to this salutary rule. Of course, the hotel had once been a palace—nearly all Italian inns have. It has fallen or risen to its present estate to meet the demand for sea-bathing accommodation in the summer, and it was, of course, bare of guests when we arrived at its doors. An ancient chambermaid and a male personage, also well on in years, who monopolised every entity of the customary hotel "personnel," from proprietor to "facchino," received us. We were unexpected, and it was Sunday, but nevertheless, two hours after our arrival we sat down to an admirable dinner, and some more than admirable Barolo, in a comfortable little room curtained and lighted, and warmed by a famous wood fire. I shuddered to think what would have been our fate had we arrived at a minor English watering-place in like circumstances.

But it was the personality of our major-domo which tended to make our recollections of the place so pleasant. No race, except the Italian, could have produced such a man. He seemed to understand exactly what it would interest us to hear, and he told it to us with the diction and manner of a polished gentleman. He assured us that though Sestri was now a desert, yet, if we came in the summer, we should find it a paradise. Then, splashing about in the waves, or going out and in of the little tents on the beach, we should see all the most beautiful ladies of Turin and Milan in the most charming "toilettes de bain," and there would be music and singing all day long. Then he would

dissertate on the general condition of the country—heavy taxation and general misery being the leading motives—and on the famine in Russia, and the abstract viciousness of absolute governments, breaking off suddenly now and then to rush to get some more wood for the fire, or some oranges, or to see whether the coffee was nearly ready.

Supple, adroit, and helpful, he was a true outcome of all the forces which have worked on the Italian character since the coming of the Huns. Through all these ages they have been bending to the storm; to win the point by address rather than by main strength has been the aim of their great men, from Macchiavelli to Cavour. They have discovered that urbanity costs nothing and is pretty sure of a reward of one kind or another, wisely casting aside as a thing of no account the bull-headed pride of the grosser races which finds an exaltation of dignity in seizing a man by the throat and thus compelling his obedience. It is true that the empire building faculty of the Italians is extinct, passed away to the more heavy-handed people who now, to all appearance, sway the world; but it is not for us to compare here the importance of their present mission with that of the other powers who scramble for every vacant square mile of the earth's surface without any clear notion as to what they are going to do with it after colouring it in the maps as their own; or the characteristics of the nation viewed in contrast with the outcome of our own great industrial advance, or with our colonising achievements in filling up one vast continent and fringing another with not very enticing reproductions of our own sad coloured inartistic "volksgefühl." It never occurred to our major-domo at Sestri that he was jeopardising his dignity by his politeness and his readiness to anticipate even our wishes. His eyes had never been opened to the beauty of boorishness masquerading as sturdy independence, and he accepted frankly the rôle of service and set himself to win his reward by courtesy, by skilful ministering, or perhaps by craft. How close he would keep, in an emergency, to that hard and fast line of rectitude, drawn by unimaginative northerners, I cannot in good breeding even discuss, seeing that at parting he showered upon my head more blessings than I ever remembered to have received before.

From Sestri the road ascends rapidly

and turns inland, but one still gets constant glimpses of the sea filling up with its vivid blue the end of some steep-sided valley far below our feet. At the summit, some two thousand three hundred feet high, the cold is very intense, and the walls of cliff on either side are covered with ice curtains wherever a stream comes down. A few dwarf junipers and scrubby pines are all that nature can support in the way of trees, there is no sign of cultivation, and for many miles we found no human dwelling of any sort. In these parts it became evident that the phase of life we had viewed on the seaward slope was exotic. After a mile or two of descent we came upon some scattered houses all bearing an indescribable look of pinched and freezing squalor in their stained white walls and broken, rickety doors and windows, giving a stranger contrast to the houses we saw yesterday than one would find anywhere in England between the cottage of labour and the cottage of gentility. In these villages and low hill-sides, where the wealth of the country is raised and gathered, only the very poor are to be found. Here they endure patiently the long nightmare which passes with them for life, warping and twisting their bodies in the never-ceasing struggle to win even the meagre pittance which is their share of the fruits they produce, and sinking into a mood of sullen and often truculent despair little in keeping with the traditions which librettists and romancers persist in adopting in their presentments of the Italian peasant.

It is only when an Englishman leaves his native land that he sees fought out, "à outrance," the struggle between man and the fruit-bearing earth. Man tills the ground in England as well as in Italy; but here he fights, as one guarding the very springs of existence, for himself and all he can call his own, and not as a mercenary. He knows nothing of the English labourer's easy saunter through a day's work, with a certainty of sufficient wage on Saturday night, of gratis medical attendance, and of a legal claim on the pockets of his more provident neighbours for support, should he be disabled for a season or laid up altogether. If the teachers of the Italian peasant should succeed in making clear to him the state and circumstances of the English labourer, and then ask him to declare at the voting urns whether he would like to have something of the same kind for himself, or continue to live and

toll as his fathers had done, he would almost certainly, wedded to custom as he is, vote for the change; and, on the other hand, if the conditions of the peasant cultivator's life were plainly and honestly put before the English labourer, he would never elect to change his condition, and set up as a farmer on his own account, and work and live as hard as the small cultivator works and lives all the world over.

That the Italian peasant should retain so much of gentleness, and good breeding, and patient endurance, in spite of his life of incessant labour and the greedy hand of the tax-gatherer ever snatching at his slender gains, is a fact which speaks volumes for the innate sweetness of the national character, and for the far-reaching effects of early civilisation. Society in Italy was never braced together by such an iron band as the mediæval feudalism of the transalpine nations. Oppression and injustice were as rife here, no doubt, as elsewhere, but the peasant never became the serf, the great gulf between lord and vassal which is not yet bridged over amongst peoples of Teutonic race was never opened. Italy has never known a war of classes like the German peasants' war, or the revolutionary struggles in France and England. There the powers of discord still exist in malignant activity, in spite of the holocaust offered at the shrine of the "triumphant democracy" of the day. The Italian peasant has the same speech, the same pride of race, the same national ideals, as the noble, who, for his part, thoroughly understands, and to a great degree shares, the tastes and prejudices of his country neighbours, and keeps his purse-strings very loose when he happens to be amongst them.

This absence of caste in its most odious form tends to produce the impression which one so often gathers in Italy, that good manners are the well-nigh universal heritage of the nation. The politeness which may often seem excessive to a stranger, is not necessarily servility or any admission of inferiority; it is rather the manifestation of a desire on the part of the speaker to make the person spoken to satisfied with himself, and the country, and all about him, and go away firmly persuaded that Italy is, indeed, the land of lands. It would be idle to deny that there is another side to the picture. The charming traits which the Italians know how to exhibit with such consummate skill, induce the passing stranger to be

prodigal of his good words in a measure which often provokes a smile from a listener who may have searched a little deeper. It is certain that untruthfulness, and violence, and treachery are rife; but I have never met with any statistics to prove whether these sins afflict Italy in a heavier degree than other European states. The use of the knife is a crying scandal, for which the fiery particles composing the Italian physique must be held responsible; just as one lays to the charge of the biting winds and chilling mists of the North the millions of gallons of beer and spirits over which our workers lavish wages such as an Italian never dreams of.

On our way over the mountains from Sestri, we took lunch at a wayside inn, in a desolate little village too high up to gather any beauty from the wealth of foliage which makes the valleys a dream of loveliness. The landscape was hard and cold, and life must be hard and cold as well, to judge from the discourse of our hostess, an old woman with a fine, sorrowful face, and eager for a chat. Poor old soul, as soon as she had put before us the best her house could afford—and it was vastly better than anything we should have eaten in a house of corresponding status in England—she sat down and told us a story of life in these parts, a story which sounded almost like a sermon preached from a text out of Leopardi. Her husband and her eight children were all dead; one of these who had been cruelly mangled by a fall from a scaffold, had crawled about for many years a helpless, hopeless cripple.

"Ah, come si fa," she sighed, "perhaps the dead are best off, now there is so much misery in the land. To live at all a man must slave hard from rise to set of sun, and then think himself lucky, for there are thousands with no work to do and no bread to eat. Once many foreign travellers came this way, but now they all go by train, and the only people who knock at my door are those who beg a scrap of bread for charity."

She showed us a photograph taken in Buenos Ayres, of a prosperous-looking family group—the paterfamilias, a nephew of hers who had gone out thither and prospered, as many Italians do.

"Ah, come si fa," she sighed again as she told us their story, and I was puzzled to determine whether the dominant tone in her voice as she spoke of this one ray of sunshine was satisfaction or discontent at

her own poverty compared with her kinsman's affluence, or acquiescence in a fate which, once spoken, neither she nor any other mortal could alter.

The view from the last turn before the rapid descent to Spezia is one of the fairest in Europe. The dazzling waters of the Gulf, the blue partially veiled by snow of the Carrara mountains, and the vast white snow-fields of the higher Apennines inland, bound the nearer landscape, which here again puts on all the rich beauty of the South. Spezia itself is a dreary, uninteresting town; and it seemed doubly dreary in the ceaseless downpour of rain which came on the night of our arrival, and ultimately frustrated our intended visit to Lerici and the lovely shores of the Gulf. We travelled by railway to Rome, and did not take to wheels again till we drove out of the Porta San Giovanni towards Frascati. Frascati is a place which suffers from the fact that it is supposed to be an easy day's excursion from Rome. People flock out by an early train, rush off to do the regulation climb to Tusculum, and return, jaded and hot, just in time to catch the train back. Frascati, albeit somewhat infected by the piteous building craze which has made Rome more desolate and horrible than even the writer of the Apocalypse figured her in his most truculent mood, is still a place where one can profitably dream a week away. To wander about the majestic gardens of the semi-deserted villas is to realise, as fully as one may, the stately life of the times which saw their creation, the ruin and extinction that has fallen on many of the families whose names they bear, and the strange taste of their present owners, which dooms these fair pleasaunces to shabby neglect and practical desertion. The twisted trunks of the ilex woods, with their opaque curtains of dark green leafage, the stately umbrella pines, and the graceful spikes of the cypresses, "like Death's lean lifted forefinger," breaking the line of the circumjacent foliage, make up a woodland picture which, if less lush and luxuriant than our glorious English groves of oak, and elm, and beech, is richer in detailed points of beauty, and more pathetic as an environment of decay.

To the lettered Englishman of Elizabeth's time, Italy was the land of mystery and legend, of strange and awful crime, and of delights sweet and intoxicating beyond the wildest dream of the voluptuary, of amorous adventure and abundant wine. In the fierce light of to-day little of her

glamour remains to attract; and though her treasures of art wield a potent charm, the strongest of all the cords that now draw men thither is the fact that Italy is, beyond all other lands, the land of memories and associations. It is not so much that the country is fair beyond words, that at any turn one may come upon some little town containing some wonder of art in painting or architecture; it is because every stream, every valley, every town, calls up the memory of some one who has helped to make history, or has added a fresh glory to art or letters. It even gives a charm to remember that one is travelling in the tracks of those "Italianite" English whose goings-on, when they returned, stirred so deeply the bile of worthy old Ascham. Nowhere do the memories of story and song rise up so thickly and so readily as in one of these old Italian gardens; nowhere are the traces of change so slight. Change, such as there is, has come in the mere efflux of time, which has brought the thick standing trees to their present lusty growth, and smoothed away the sharp edges of the stone of baluster and colonnade with a tender growth of lichen and moss.

To try to people the streets of an Italian city to-day with the personages of a dead and gone age, involves a mental strain which can only be kept up by those gifted with an imagination abnormally strong and vivid, but in the groves of the Torlonia and Aldobrandini villas one is almost surprised at not meeting ladies and gallants such as one sees on the stage in Elizabethan comedy, or such as Inglesant met at that wonderful banquet in the house of Cardinal Rinuccini.

Everybody who goes to Frascati makes the excursion to Tusculum. The views alone would repay one were the ascent ten times more wearisome than it is, and to sit down on the stone benches of the little theatre at the top is to find oneself travelling back into the days of the men who made the place famous, as easily as one realises the seventeenth century in the old gardens below. One is here in the footsteps of Cicero in the place and at the season when the world went well with him. Here he had gathered round him his beloved statues and books, rarely writing a letter in which he did not remind his correspondent to lose no opportunity of picking up for him some manuscripts for his library or work of art for the adornment of his house; here he fell naturally into that optimist mood which is so strongly

marked in the somewhat jejune and artificial moralising of the "De Senectute." But here, likewise, he heard the news of his ruin and proscription, and from here he set out on that last journey destined to a fatal ending in the woods of Formiæ.

The road from Frascati to Palestrina runs through well-cultivated valleys, girt by the lower ridges of the mountains. High up are built the villages, shining white in the sun. The prospect is pleasing enough, but it wants the dreamy loveliness of the view we have left behind us—the view over the Campagna looking back towards Rome and the Sabine Hills. On a rugged spur of the mountains to the left, near where our road joins the great highway between Rome and Naples, stands Colonna, the nest of the great family whose name is read so frequently in the annals of the Papal states, and here, almost within sight of it, was fought out "a outrage" the struggle between its lord and Boniface the Eighth, the most arrogant and turbulent priest who ever sat in St. Peter's chair. In the conclave of 1294 the Colonna Cardinals had resisted his election, and thereby had incurred his undying hatred; but in the early part of his reign he was too much occupied in turning to advantage the quarrels of the Kings of Naples and Aragon, and in other foreign intrigue, to gratify his spite against his neighbours, but he had not for a moment forgotten it. In 1297 the Colonna, who then held Palestrina, imprudently attacked and carried off a convoy of sumptuous furniture which the Pope had sent from Rome for the decoration of his palace at Anagni, and thus gave occasion and excuse for the issue of that ferocious bull of excommunication which delivered over the Colonnas and all their possessions to destruction and plunder. The Orsini, ready at all times to harry their hereditary foes, hastened to offer their services to the Pope, and after a few weeks the Colonnas were flying for their lives, proscribed and ruined men. One of them, young Sciarra Colonna, escaped by sea, and was taken by pirates. A French ship rescued him, and he betook himself to the Court of Philip the Fair to bide his time.

Palestrina was at that date a town of great strength. Thither the two Colonna Cardinals withdrew, and were soon reinforced by other members and retainers of the family. After an obstinate siege the place fell by that act of treachery which has been immortalised by Dante, the counsel to promise lavishly, and to perform

as much as might be convenient, which Guido da Montefeltro gave and Boniface so readily accepted. On this account Dante assigns to Boniface a place in hell during his lifetime, an honour accorded to no one else, locating him with the followers of Simon Magus. Beguiled by the Pope's promises, the Colonnas went forth to do submission. They were detained nominally as guests, really as prisoners, during the time that their city was being destroyed, and the site of it sown with salt, and the ruin of their house seemed complete.

In 1303 the long smouldering quarrel between the Pope and Philip the Fair burst into flame. Sciarra Colonna returned to Italy, taking with him William of Nozaret, another bitter enemy of Boniface. The Pope, meantime, had withdrawn from the summer heats of Rome to Anagni, a city which lies about a dozen miles farther on the road we are traversing, and from there he launched his bull of excommunication against the King of France. Suddenly there came the news that Sciarra, at the head of a band of mercenaries, was advancing from the Tuscan frontier under the banner of France, and before Anagni could be put in a state of defence the foe was within the walls, and Boniface in the hands of the man who had so long a catalogue of wrongs to avenge. For several weeks he was kept a captive, suffering shameful indignities at the hands of his captors, till at last the people of Anagni, who at first were not sorry to see their tyrannous master receive a lesson at the hand of a stronger tyrant, rose scandalised at the cruelties perpetrated on an old man and a priest, and drove out the troops of Sciarra, and sent Boniface under the guard of the Orsini chiefs back to Rome, where he died a few weeks afterwards, heart-broken by the shame of his discomfiture and disgrace.

Palestrina, like Volterra and Cortona, has its origin in days beyond the ken of the chronologist. It clings to the steep face of the rock against which it is built, the houses finding a foothold in the ruins of the gigantic Temple of Fortune, built by Sylla in the plenitude of his power on the site of a yet earlier city, which had been the stronghold of the younger Marius. After the suicide of Marius, Sylla determined to celebrate his victory after the fashion of a conqueror of the age. He levelled Præneste to the earth, and slew or exported its people, and then

set to work to build a city which should be one of the wonders of the world.

The Temple of Fortune was, in its day, the largest building in Europe, and to judge from the restorations of archaeologists, it must also have been the most sumptuous, but now its very ruins have perished. The hand of the destroyer has always been heavy upon the place. After Sylla and Boniface came Eugenius the Tenth, who, to punish a rebellion of the Colonnas, again razed the place to the earth in 1436, not even sparing the cathedral. It was rebuilt, somewhat as we see it to-day, under Nicolas the Fifth, the Colonnas still being its lords, but in 1630 it passed to the Barberini, and with them it still remains.

The road into the town winds upward in zigzags, and one sees first, on the face of the declivity, bits of early polygonal masonry, Cyclopean or Pelagic, then comes the Etruscan, and upon this is laid the brick foundations of Sylla's vast temple. Higher up one may here and there come upon fragments of pillar and cornice worked into the walls of the squalid houses, and at the highest point of the town the Barberini have built their palace, the central pavilion of which occupies the site, and, in a measure, follows the lines of the apex of the fane of Fortune. From it stretch out two semicircular wings, which contain divers vast gaunt salons with gaudily painted ceilings in the vilest style of the Decadence, and numerous smaller apartments. Over the whole of Palestrina there hangs an air of mournful decay, and of this sad city this mouldy, deserted palace seems the most trifling spot, yet here a curious incongruous evidence of revelry met our eyes. There were placards on the walls telling of a veglione which had been held there in the last carnival season. The aspect of the rooms now almost forbade the notion that music could make itself heard, and lamps galore would be needed to dissipate the gloom which, on this particular afternoon, seemed heavy and profound enough to have damped the ardour of the most inveterate dancer in Italy. There are not more than a dozen shops in the town, all the rest of the houses having the air of sordid poverty, so one was a little puzzled to see how enough dancers could have been got together to make a decent show in the desert of dancing floor. Apropos of the veglione, one may assume from the announcements above-named that Palestrina keeps early

hours, for it was provided that the dancing was to be over at ten o'clock. The chief sight of the palace is the wonderful mosaic which was discovered down by the cathedral in 1638. It gives a complete pictured record of the overflowing of the Nile, evidently from the hand of some artist who had seen the marvels of Egypt. There is pictured every object which one recognises as a common one of the land, crocodiles, ichneumons, hippopotami, the lotos, the ibis, and priests and warriors in appropriate headgear. The motive of the work is evidently one of joy and thanksgiving for the beneficent flood. It is a strange freak of chance that this magnificent work should have survived the many overthrows of this ill-starred town.

The people of Palestrina enjoy a somewhat sinister reputation.

"Are there any brigands left in Palestrina?" I asked our driver.

"No, signor; the only brigands in Italy now are those in the Government offices," he replied, delighted at the chance of having a fling at "Il governo."

Let it be Papal, or absolute, or constitutional, the Italian will always hate the power which taxes him and keeps him in order, unless he should happen to be one of the official gang, who live on salaries of next to nothing, paid for services which are often worth less than nothing. The people hanging about the streets of Palestrina seemed gloomy and depressed enough, and apparently had plenty of leisure to devote to brigandage should their tastes have led them that way; but probably this profession had been found long ago to be unprofitable and consequently abandoned. Their sad, sullen looks were natural enough. How could any one be cheerful living in these ruinous, malodorous streets, with nothing to do and in chronic uncertainty as to the date of the next meal?

From the terrace of the Barberini palace one may get a view of the whole length of the Pontine marshes and the sea beyond. The guide pointed out to us two specks on the horizon, which he told us were Nettuno and Porto d'Anzio, the only dwellings of men on that pestilence-stricken shore. At the corner of a street we saw some baskets of fish which had come from there—hideous reptilian creatures with wide gaping mouths and wing-like, spiky fins, and also some eels, green and poisonous of aspect, looking as if they might have assimilated all the malaria germs of the mud from which they had been taken. Accord-

ing to our guide the men in these parts suffer much more from malaria than the women. The air of Palestrina itself is of course above suspicion. That spring day, as we stood gazing over the plains, we understood why words like "frigidus" and "gelidus" are used so often in the classics to qualify Præneste. The air was like that of an English April day, and there was a good deal of it. It came tearing, up the valley, bringing angry-looking clouds, and whipping our faces with big drops of rain. Either from the malign colouring of the sombre sky, or from the unkind touch of the wind, a wonder arose in my mind why it was that any old Roman, wanting to go into the country to escape the city heats, should have gone to Palestrina, with Tivoli and Frascati lying nearer at hand. The prospect was fine, even grand, but it had nothing of the dreamy beauty of that we enjoyed yesterday. Perhaps Tibur and Tusculum, through their easy access, may have become as Margate and Ramsgate, and the more fastidious of the patricians have been driven to Præneste and other remoter stations for the sake of greater seclusion.

From Palestrina to Tivoli one passes over the course of the ancient Via Prænestina, the original pavement of which is in many places still "in situ." The country is neither very beautiful nor very interesting. The road winds through the low foot-hills, and the long stretch of the Campagna with its magic loveliness of distant effect is lost. Here and there are charming bits where the road pierces an intervening ridge of rock through a cleft cut by that indomitable patience of the Roman in predynamite days; or where one sees below in the gorge the still perfect arch of the ancient bridge over which the road formerly ran. The climb up to Tivoli is steep. As we ascended under the sombre sky through the thick olive woods on the hillside, the aspect of the place was chill and forbidding, and this impression was not lessened when we dismissed our carriage, and found ourselves guests for the night at the historic "Albergo della Sibylla."

As a rule, one visits Tivoli in fine weather at midday. My past impressions of our hostelry were that it was a somewhat cheerful, not to say noisy place. I thought I remembered lunch under an awning, on which the sun beat fiercely, with many others feasting around, and two, if not more, native musicians waking

the echoes with voice and guitar. Not that we were oppressed with silence now, there was noise enough; but it was the thunderous roar of the falls which took their leap into the chasm just beneath our feet. The awning was there, too, needless as far as sunshine was concerned, and only serving to increase the noise by flapping and cracking as the gusty wind got under it. The hotel itself is humble, but better than its mean entrance in the narrow, dirty street promises.

Divers of the unemployed of Tivoli accompanied us into the dark, dingy entry, and two or three followed us up the dirty stone stairs through a network of passages to our bedroom. These proved to be local guides, who informed us with great decision of manner that we must see the falls to-morrow under their guidance. The room was bare and chill, with a brick floor and ill-fitting windows, which let in both the wind and the deafening noise of the cascade. The one dim candle made little impression on the dusk of our apartment, and the whole place had an air which made us disposed to endorse Georges Sand's remark as to "*l'affreuse auberge de la Sibylle, un vrai coupe-gorge de l'Opéra Comique*," but our mood became more cheerful under the influence of the good dinner—which an Italian inn can always supply at the shortest notice—and of some excellent red wine. Still, it was evident that sleeping guests at the "*Sibylla*" were somewhat rare, the great business of the place being to feed the crowds which flock out every day from Rome.

For the ban of the show-place lies very heavy upon Tivoli. Everything is a sight to be seen, for the price of a franc here and a franc there. No waterfall, however beautiful, could escape vulgarisation under such treatment as has been dealt out to the headlong Anico; and elaboration in the way of path, and staircase, and coign of vantage is more shocking to the sense of fitness than the splitting up of the stream into rivulets for service in the dozen or more factories which are set on the crest of the ravine. Here one is conscious that the stream-sections are doing useful work, and doing it in graceful fashion, making the big wheels spin round in rainbow glory, without any polluting smoke, and finishing off on their own account as very respectable cascades, after all. Viewed from the opposite side of the valley the effect of these threads of

water woven into the thick curtain of greenery on the face of the rock is a rare and beautiful one.

The charm of Tivoli suffers much more from the excursionist element than from the industrial. In addition to the steam tramway a railway now links it with the outer world, and the crowd of visitors has increased enormously in volume; but, it would appear, not proportionally in propriety of demeanour, for the owner of the *Villa d'Este*—a villa with a garden surpassing in beauty anything that even Frascati can show—has been compelled to exclude strangers on account of the ravages that certain selfish barbarians have wrought to his trees and fountains. Any one who has once loitered away a day in these exquisite gardens, and delighted in the prospect of the distant hills and the strip of the Campagna seen between the giant cypresses—veritable mountains of dark foliage, grown so close as to give the impression of a solid mass—and listened to the tinkle of the thousand tiny cascades descending from basin to basin down the slope of the garden, will have made for himself a picture of loveliness which time will labour to efface in vain.

When one in this case goes back to Tivoli, and finds the gates of this paradise barred against him, he may, with all reason, indulge in a service of excommunication, as lengthy and truculent as Uncle Toby's, against the misbegotten loons who by their malevolent vandalism have wrought him this injury.

## PREFACES.

THERE is no part of a book so difficult to write as the Preface. When an author has chosen his subject, collected his materials, and mapped out his ground, he bowls along, in most cases, before a favouring gale, and in due time arrives at the desired "*Finis*." Then he is disposed to dismount from his Pegasus, and enjoy the pleasure which always lies in work completed. But, no; he is taken aback with an authoritative reminder that the public will demand a preface. But do the public really care for prefaces? Is not the alleged demand a genial fiction on the part of that most conservative of individuals, the publisher? And why should such a tyranny be imposed on the unfending author? He has said all he wants

to say; he feels that his book may fairly be left to justify itself—out of its own mouth, as it were, to vindicate its being. But it matters not. The coercion of custom, the tyranny of tradition imposes the preface, though often in his preface the guileless scribe gives himself away to his critics. Yes, before the puppets begin, there must be a flourish on the pipes. The curtain must not rise until the fiddles have performed a preliminary canter. The more's the pity; for the flourish is often a feeble performance, and the canter ends in a break-down. A book may be a masterpiece—all but the preface. When the jaded brain cannot be whipped into its whilom vivacity, and only with effort and undue pressure fills up the superfluous pages, what is to be expected? There are times when a writer sitting down to this task feels like a horseman, weary with his day's travel, who on reaching his inn is told he must ride some miles further.

When a man undertakes to write his preface, whether through choice or compulsion, he finds himself confronted by several questions. Shall it be long or short—grave or gay? Shall it contain an elaborate analysis of the book to which it is to be prefixed, or shall it be confined to generalities? Shall it be justificatory? Shall it breathe a sweet humility, or kindle with that self-consciousness which the French call "*la morgue littéraire*"? According to the Italians, the preface is "*la salsa del libro*," the sauce of the book, in which case it should be compounded of the most piquant ingredients, and with professional skill. Sometimes an author, feeling unequal to work of such nicety, or wishful to shelter himself under another's ægis, will invite a veteran hand to mix it for him, and serve it up with his name attached. Such timidity is hardly to be commended; yet it is a graceful thing when a popular writer voluntarily renders this kind of assistance to a tyro, a novice, a young disciple, leading him down, as it were, to the footlights, and with kindly words of commendation introducing him to the audience. Nor can one object when the divine impulse of friendship constrains Damon with his shield to ward off attack from gentle Pythias, and fight in front of him. Still, as a rule, a man should write his own preface as well as his own book. Our earlier dramatists evinced a strange partiality for prologues written by others to their tragedies or comedies; but I think these acts of benevolence or patronage were

seldom successful. Either the prologue was better than the play, or the play than the prologue; in the former case, the play wasn't wanted—in the latter, the prologue.

It is not good policy to bully the reader in the preface, though this has been and still is done—and sometimes by men of light and leading; like Landor, fretting that the world does not do justice to their genius; sometimes by vapid theorists, out of sheer vanity or the arrogance that comes of ignorance. These "helmeted prefaces," as St. Jerome designates the one attached to his Version of the Bible, are apt to provoke the reader's resentment—or his laughter. Dr. Armstrong, irritated by the cold reception given to his very blank verse in his "*Art of Preserving Health*," avenged himself upon the public in the preface to his "*Miscellanies*." "He would give them," he says, "much bolder strokes, as well as more delicate touches, but that he dreads the danger of writing too well (!), and feels the value of his own labour too sensibly to bestow it upon the mobility!" These were brave words, but the public only laughed. They might be persuaded to take his physic; but nothing should induce them to swallow his poetry! Scaliger revelled in the composition of these minatory expositions—in which his swashing blows fell upon everybody who did not believe in Scaliger. His antagonists retaliated in the same fashion; but this battle of the scribes took place when as yet no public existed, and the sword-play was as purely make-believe as a stage combat. Our own Milton could deal as hard thrusts as most men. In his preface to his "*Defence of the English People*," he thus bears down against Salmasius—I quote from the old translation, which by no means exaggerates the force of the Miltonic Latin: "It would be folly in me to make such particular animadversions upon his childishness and frenzies throughout his book, as I do here upon a few in the beginning of it; which yet I would be willing enough to do (for we hear that he is swelled with pride and conceit to the utmost degree imaginable) if the undigested and unmethodical bulk of his book did not protect him. He was resolved to take a course like the soldier in Terence, to save his bacon; and it was very cunning in him to stuff his book with so much puerility and so many silly whimsies, that it might nauseate the smartest man in the world to death to take notice of them all.



Only I thought it might not be amiss to give a specimen of him in the preface; and to let the serious reader have a taste of him at first, that he might guess by the first dish that is served up, how noble an entertainment the rest are likely to make; and that he may imagine with himself what an infinite number of fooleries and impertinences must needs be heaped up together in the body of the book, when they stand so thick in the very entrance into it; where, of all other places, they ought to have been shunned."

In striking contrast to this truculent kind of preface is the deprecatory, much affected by callow rhymesters and budding novelists, who pretend that they have been impelled into print at "the desire of friends," and endeavour by a profusion of deferential phrases to wheedle the critic and propitiate the reader. It is of no use. If the wares be good, 'tis a foolish policy to underrate their value; if they be worthless, the vendor's affectation of humility will not avail to blind the experienced eye. Undoubtedly, genius itself is not always aware of the strength of its wings, and, in attempting its earlier flights, will assume an air of dignified and not unbecoming modesty. Thus Keats, in the preface to his "Endymion," says: "Knowing within myself the manner in which this poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public. What manner I mean will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. . . . It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live." Here we have the confidence as well as the modesty and self-restraint of genius. There is no Uriah Heep-like show of humbleness and deference. Compare it with the affectation of Lord Byron's preface to his "Hours of Idleness": "A considerable portion of these poems has been privately printed, at the request and for the perusal of my friends. I am sensible that the partial and frequently injudicious admiration of a social circle is not the criticism by which poetical genius is to be estimated, yet, 'to do greatly' we must 'dare greatly'; and I have hazarded my reputation and feelings in publishing this volume. . . . With slight hopes and some fears, I publish this first and last attempt. To the dictates of

young ambition may be ascribed many actions more criminal and equally absurd. To a few of my own age the contents may afford amusement; I trust they will, at least, be found harmless."

Poets' prefaces, from Ben Jonson to Dryden, some of whose are models of good English and sound criticism, and from Dryden to Wordsworth, who developed in his a theory of the poetic art, would supply an interesting theme. Present-day poets, by the way, are sparing of their prefatory words. They say but little, and do not say that well; or they say nothing, like Lord Tennyson, and leave their work to be its own herald. Another class of prefaces which must not be ignored is the Expository, in which the author develops the plan of his book, enforces its moral, and describes the conditions under which it was written, the motives that impelled him to write, and the object at which he aims. Scientific or theological treatises, histories, philosophical systems—to books of this kind an explanatory introduction is always useful and frequently indispensable; as are the prefaces to the works of the old divines—such as Chillingworth, Henry More, Whichcote, Barrow; to Locke's "Essay on the Understanding"; to Newton's "Principia"; to Hallam's "History of Literature." A subdivision of the expository class of preface is furnished by authors who become their own critics, and persist in pressing their personal opinions on the mind of the reader in opposition to, or disparagement of, the judgement expressed by professional authorities. A great offender in this respect was the late Lord Lytton, who never wearied of attempts to force the reader to adopt his own standpoint, and see through his magnifying glasses the merits and beauties of his work. One example will suffice. In his preface to the 1853 edition of "Lucretia," a work which the critics had severely handled, he writes: "'Lucretia' was completed and published before 'The Caxtons.' The moral design of the first was misunderstood and assailed; that of the last was generally acknowledged and approved; but"—the adverse judges were all in the wrong!—"the moral design in both was nevertheless precisely the same. In one it was sought through the darker side of human nature, in the other through the more sunny and cheerful—one shows the evil, the other the salutary influences of early circumstance and training. Necessarily, therefore, the first resorts

to the tragic elements of awe and distress—the second to the comic elements of human and agreeable emotion.” Here we have it settled for us; but why did the author leave us to discover his purpose in a preface? “These differences,” adds Lord Lytton with much complacency, “serve to explain the different reception that awaited the two, and may teach us how little the real conception of an author is known, and how little it is cared for!” As if it were not the author’s business so to develop his conception that it can neither be mistaken nor ignored.

Something might be said, had I the space, about the quaint or whimsical preface, such as Burton’s to the “Anatomy of Melancholy,” or Thomas Fuller’s to the “Worthies of England”; about the witty or humorous, such as Sterne’s or Swift’s. Then there is the preface dedicatory, of which an attractive example is supplied by Sir Philip’s to the “Arcadia.” “Read it,” he says to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, “at your idle times, and the follies your good judgement will find in it blame not, but laugh at; and so, looking for no better stuff than, as in a haberdasher’s shop, glasses or feathers, you will continue to love the writer, who doth exceedingly love you, and most, most heartily prays you may long live to be a principal ornament to the family of the Sidneys.” But this kind of preface should be undertaken only by writers who can turn a compliment prettily. The hortatory preface, the last variety to which I shall allude, is much cultivated by preachers and teachers, moralists and divines, and is much cultivated by the makers of goody-goody books. For myself, I can’t abide it. When not insincere, it is inane.

These different classes will be found, I think, to include the vast majority of prefaces—of those “necessary evils” which the author composes with so much pain, and the reader dismisses with so much indifference. Happily, they are diminishing now, at an appreciable rate, both in number and in length, so that we may venture to look forward to a golden age when their necessity will cease to be apparent, and the tribulation of the author will be at rest.

### SOME OLD DRAMATIC DIFFICULTIES.

At the present time, dissensions are frequent and free between the managers of

theatres on the one hand, and those of music-halls on the other. Possibly legislation of some sort may be needed to settle the difficulty. Yet it is not improbable that matters may compose themselves in much the same gradual unconscious fashion as that in which the distinction originally arose. At all events, it is interesting to notice some of the disasters which attended caterers for public amusement, when the line had not yet been drawn between the legitimate drama and the “sketch,” and when the law knew no difference between dramatic representation and bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and the like.

Scarcely had the enthusiasm for the play well established itself in the golden days of Elizabeth, when its exuberance was curbed, for one reason or another, by at least two hostile forces. As early as the year 1601, an Order of the Lords in Council prohibited the existence of more than two play-houses: one in Golden Lane, and the other—Shakespeare’s “Globe”—in Bankside. In this case the object, no doubt, was to enable the sovereign to gather in the revenue accruing from the licenses more effectually than would be possible if a greater number of houses had to be watched. This order, it may be stated, was singularly inoperative. The motive which actuated the other restrictive force was quite different. Puritan feeling began to make itself felt; and in 1605 an entry may be seen among the archives of the Corporation of Plymouth to the following effect: “P to the ent’lude Players to departe the Towne without playinge 2/6<sup>d</sup>.” Money, at that time, was worth, probably, four times its value in the present day; so the “unco’ guild” of Plymouth did not parade their piety for nothing. Some years later, it was a more costly job to get the players to “move on.” The Mayor and Aldermen of King’s Lynn, after petitioning the Lord Chancellor, who was the High Steward of that town, to “be a meanes that all the compaynes of players which yerely resort to this towne may nott be suffered here to use playeing, notwithstandinge their grantes and patentes made unto them,” entered in the civic accounts an item of forty shillings “to send away his Majestie’s Plaieurs of his private chamber in Yorke, without actinge here.” A similar expense was incurred again at the same place, in 1636.

James the First’s Queen, Anne of Denmark, was a keen patroness of acting—

at least of the acting of those who gained her Royal favour—and sent letters to the Justices of the Peace, Mayors, and Sheriffs of all cities, commending to them her company of players, and requesting that in all cases the town-halls might be placed at their disposal, and every other facility afforded them. These commands were reluctantly received; and not without reason, to judge from the following minute from the proceedings of the Town Council of Southampton in 1623. The town-hall was refused to the players "because the table, benches, and fourmes theire sett and placed for holdinge the Kinge's Courtes are by those meanes broken and spoyled . . . that the Courts cannot be held in such decent and convenient order as becometh."

In spite of such drawbacks, and of the frowns of the Puritans, Royalty continued to smile upon the drama. They were, however, jealous of their prerogative, as is shown by the trial, in 1614, of Sir John Yorke before the Star Chamber. Judgment was given that "the greatest subject in England can have no common players, and to have them it is a riot. It is no trade, but they are Parliament rogues." Accordingly, year after year, Acts of Parliament were passed with the vague object of "restraining the abuses of the players." In these, as, indeed, throughout the attempts at its suppression, acting is classed with bear-baiting, cock-fighting, cudgelling, and "other unlawful assemblies."

A temporary stop was put to all such amusements by the death, in 1612, of Prince Henry Frederick of Wales, when plays and shows were prohibited on pain of imprisonment until further notice. When they were not thus checked, play-houses, during the latter part of James the First's reign, seem to have done a good trade. For instance, in 1619, a petition was presented by many influential persons dwelling in the neighbourhood of Blackfriars with regard to a house of entertainment there, to the effect that "there was daily such a resort of people and such a multitude of coaches—many of them hackney coaches, bringing people of all sorts—that at times the streets could not contain them, they clogged up Ludgate Hill also, so that they endangered one another, broke down stalls, threw down goods, and the inhabitants were unable to get to their houses or bring in their provisions, the tradesmen to utter their wares,

or passengers to get to the common water stairs, without danger of life and limb; quarrels and effusion of blood had followed, and other dangers might be occasioned by the broils, plots and practices of such an unruly multitude. These inconveniences happening almost daily in the winter time—not excepting Lent—from one or two o'clock till five at night—the usual time for christenings, burials and afternoon service—the inhabitants were unable to get to church," etc. It is not known whether any action was taken on this petition.

Prince Charles had his own company of players, to whom we find, in 1623, a sum of six and eightpence was paid on one occasion, and, on another, five shillings; while thirteen and fourpence was once given them for the setting up of "stoopes" or booths. When he came to the throne he would still have patronised play-acting, showing particular preference to a house in Whitehall called the Cock-pit, but the Plague necessitated special precautions, and seemed to render general mourning only decent. Consequently we find Charles granting his license to players "so long as the infection of the Plague in London do not weekly exceed forty." Similarly, in 1625, the Lord Chamberlain issued special orders through the Master of the Revels, that players thrown out of work in London should not go into the country for fear of spreading the infection. Many went abroad.

No sooner had the players been relieved by the subsidence of the Plague, than they fell before the growing Puritan spirit of repression. In 1631, a house in Blackfriars was demolished without leave asked or given. The owners demanded twenty-one thousand pounds as compensation. This is an enormous sum, if the comparative value of money at that time be taken into account—more than theatrical property often brings even to-day. Finally a sum of three thousand pounds was given them to settle matters quietly; towards which the inhabitants of the neighbourhood contributed one hundred pounds for the sake of getting rid of the players without more ado. Two years later, Prynne published his "Histrio-Mastix," wherein he arraigned play-writers, players, and all their doings. This book had a large sale, and both expressed and led public opinion. No answer to it was forthcoming till the year 1662, when, encouraged by the resuscitation of amusements under Charles the

Second, Sir Richard Baker wrote his "Theatrum Redivivum." The depression under which acting suffered about the date of Prynne's book is humorously suggested in a fragment of doggerel contained in a letter bearing the date of 1636 :

Then came the K<sup>t</sup> agen with his lawe  
Against lovers the worst that ever you sawe,  
In dressing of w<sup>ch</sup> he playnely did shew it  
He was a far better Cooke than a Poet,  
And only he the art of it had  
Of two good players to make one bad.  
And these are all the plays we have had,  
Indifferent good and indifferent bad;  
When they'l be worsor, or when they'l be better,  
Is more for a Prophetie then for a letter.

The knight referred to is probably Sir William Davenant, Poet Laureate, and godson of Shakespeare, who had a license from the King to keep a play-house. The plays he produced were said to be worth nothing without the mounting, music, and dances with which they were supported. This is the first trace of the demand which has produced the modern variety entertainment. In spite of the high patronage he enjoyed, small success seems to have attended his ventures. In 1636, for instance, he produced on May the twenty-third at the Charter House an "Entertainment at Rutland House." Four hundred spectators at five shillings each were expected; only one hundred and fifty came. Perhaps the price was too high. At all events, when, after the Restoration, Davenant built a theatre designed by Wren in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the pit was the fashionable part, and the prices varied from one shilling to half-a-crown, according to the season or the popularity of the piece. A stool on the stage for critics or fashionable men cost one shilling extra.

Charles the First, sympathising with the more light-hearted of his subjects, continued to encourage the drama, and, in 1636, witnessed, in company with the Queen, the first performance by the students of Christ Church, Oxford, of a "tragi-comedy" called "The Royal Slave," of which the scene was laid at Sardis. The play was written by William Cartwright, one of the students, and the music composed by Henry Lawes. The famous Dr. Busby, then at Christ Church, won great applause for his performance of the principal part. Not long afterwards, however, another check was received by the players. In 1642, because of the distressed state of Ireland, general fasting and prayer was enjoined upon the people of England, and all plays were prohibited. Nevertheless,

private performances went on, and a newspaper of the year 1643 contains the following remonstrance: "I am persuaded in time they—the Royalists—will go near to put down all preaching and praying and have some religious masque or play instead of morning and evening prayers; it has been an old fashion at Court, amongst the Protestants there, to shut up the Sabbath with some wholesome piece of Ben Jonson or Davenant, a kind of comical divinity." Such private doings were scarcely amenable to public jurisdiction; but very soon the final blow fell upon public performances.

In 1647, the House of Lords ordained—with the consent of the Commons—that the Lord Mayor of London and the Justices of the Peace for the City and the parts adjacent should take steps to suppress all stage plays, interludes, and common plays. Every actor caught performing such things was, for the first offence, to be publicly whipped in a market town on a market day, and, for the second, to be treated as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond, and committed to prison. To carry out this order it was enjoined that the "Commander-in-chief of the Guard of the Houses" should give his assistance, and that the militia might also be employed. A piece called "The Bloody Brother," at the Cock-pit, was actually broken up by soldiers. And in 1655, a letter to Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State, relates how, "at the play-house this week many were put to the rout by the soldiers, and had broken crowns." Every spectator caught in a play-house was to be fined five shillings for each offence; the money to go to the poor of the parish. After this there was no more life in the drama till close upon the end of the Commonwealth. Actors joined one or other of the armies, and play-writers turned pamphleteers. Although occasionally cases of play-acting occur, it was practically stamped out from 1648 till 1658.

The supremacy of Richard Cromwell proved the signal for a revival. Several new houses sprang up, and the play became the fashion. Charles the Second lent a willing and effective hand to the resurrection of the drama, but thought it necessary to attempt to restrict the number of companies. However, as he gave his license to almost any one who asked or paid for it, the business soon got beyond his control. Abuses became frequent, and a complaint is heard that "discontents in Ireland were

raised to a great height because players were allowed to condemn the Irish on their stage." The Cock-pit was the Royal house; and one George Johnson was, in 1662, receiving thirty pounds a year from the Treasurer of the Chamber for managing it. With the Restoration came the introduction of actresses. Female parts had previously been played by the choir-boys from the Chapels Royal. Soon Betterton came on the scene; and the drama, after a short period of almost complete extinction, took a new lease of life, and came to admit of elaboration and separation into countless classes of entertainment not at that time conceived of.

## TRYING OUR WINGS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I AM a swindler. Personally I prefer to style myself a toll-keeper on the broad path that leadeth to destruction, but that is a somewhat cumbersome phrase, and therefore I cheerfully adopt the term in general use. There is no pride about me—it was kicked out of me long ago—and I admit at once that I am what plain-spoken people call a swindler. Does the confession shock you? If so, I cannot help it. Truth is one of the luxuries I allow myself out of business hours, and, besides, I do not wish to gain your sympathy under false pretences. It would be of no use to me.

Every one writes reminiscences nowadays, but as gentlemen of my profession have a natural objection to committing themselves—or being "committed"—they have as a rule failed to follow the fashion; indeed, I have never come across a really reliable volume of swindler's recollections. Nor do I propose to fill the blank, though I have grown grey in the profession, and my name—or rather, to be accurate, my names stand high on our roll of fame; but I have thought that a leaf from my notebook may perhaps amuse those who take an interest in a very ancient, if not exactly honourable, company. I have even been told there is a moral attached to my little experience; but this is a point on which I cannot be expected to pronounce. It is many years since I had anything to do with morals.

The events I am about to narrate took place a great many years ago. I was called—let me see—yes, I remember now! I was called Harry Fuller at that time, and was a young man of twenty-two or

three. Some men are born swindlers, others only become swindlers through the accident of circumstances. I think I must have been born a swindler, for I cannot remember the time when I did not delight in cheating—and for cheating's sake, more than for the paltry profit I sometimes made by the exercise of my one talent. At the time of which I now write, however, though I had achieved some slight success as an amateur, I had not yet formally joined the ranks of the professionals, albeit all my aspirations led me that way. I was a tea-taster then, and resided at Lulchester, a sleepy little town some fifteen miles from London, whither I journeyed almost daily by the railway.

Ah, me! I often look back with mingled pain and pleasure to those early Lulchester days, when three or four of us—all young, all clever I think, all dishonest I am sure—were starting light-heartedly on our journey through life. We were sitting down to the great game with little more than a couple of loaded dice in our pockets, so to speak, and yet how gay and confident we were! And how well I remember them, these friends of my youth! O'Rourke, a man of great talent—I have never since met so powerful a swearer—who, however, recklessly threw away all his chances, and finally sank into a degraded condition of comparative respectability; merry little Griggs, a sharp hand at most things, but at cards a sharper, who was even then giving tokens of the genuine ability underlying his frivolous exterior; last, but not least in love, dear old Jack Johnson, whose really great gifts seemed to justify our fond prophecy that he would yet "go far." And I may add that a few years later he actually went as far as Australia—at the Government's expense; but that is an old, old story now.

In those days O'Rourke, Griggs, Johnson, and I were as thick as thi— as inseparable as D'Artagnan and the three musketeers. We had drifted quite naturally into an alliance, which most of our fellow-townsmen dubbed offensive. Although, like myself, my friends had not yet practised professionally, they also had dabbled in the art, and almost without knowing it, we had all four advanced as far as the first stage of the Rook's Progress. Thanks to certain escapades of ours—mere boyish follies—those who knew us well preferred to avoid us, and as they also busily circulated tales to our discredit, all the respectable people of the neighbour-

hood began to look askance at us. And when people have once made up their minds that a man is "a bad lot," they are hardly prepared to allow him to be honest, even should he desire it. They keep aloof from him entirely, and thus drive him into the arms of the very people certain to encourage him in what the good people call his "evil courses." The sheep will have nothing to do with him, and, as a result, he must either browse alone or herd with the goats. So it was with us. The more our other acquaintances shrank from us, the more closely we clung together, and when at last we found ourselves banished from the domain of respectability, we hardly regretted our ostracism.

To tell the truth, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves in a quiet way. Ah, what golden visions were ours! What Aladdin's palaces we built, what subtle schemes we wove! I can see now that we were mere idle dreamers, full of the illusions of youth, with an enthusiastic belief in the infinite gullibility of mankind and the sublime self-confidence of the untried; but at the time we thought our plans exceedingly business-like, and were quite convinced that we would turn out to be quite the smartest men in the profession—when we adopted it. But somehow we hesitated to take the plunge. We bragged a great deal about our future doings, but still I went on with my tea-tasting, little Griggs, who was a clerk, and O'Rourke, who was a cheap auctioneer in a small way of business, went regularly to their offices in the City, and Jack Johnson, who was "something on the turf"—I once heard a racing friend of his describe him as "a daisy!"—made frequent excursions to all sorts of places. In fact, we were like young birds perched on the edge of the nest, twittering to each other how easy it was to fly, and what tremendous flights we would make when we saw fit to take to our wings; but as yet the mother-bird, in the shape of necessity or opportunity, had not appeared to shove us off our perch and launch us from security into space.

It was just at this point of our lives that we met Alexander McCormick, a gentleman of Scottish extraction, who had recently settled down in a comfortable villa on the outskirts of Lulchester, and who had several times travelled up to London in our compartment. He was quite an elderly man—nearly sixty, I should say—with smooth, clean-shaven face, short black hair thickly sprinkled

with grey, and eyes always carefully protected from the light by a large pair of blue spectacles. His general expression was mild, almost to childishness, and he had a smile which was a perfect miracle of foolishness, while his conversation did not belie his looks, for he was always telling stories of how he had been fooled by some cunning impostor. Altogether he was just the kind of man I felt instinctively drawn towards, and I at once determined to hold out the right hand of good-fellowship to him, in the vague hope that I might in time be able to slip the left into his pockets.

Mr. McCormick received my overtures very amicably. He had evidently a mind above the petty scandal of a place like Lulchester, and what he must have heard about us did not affect his manner towards us in the least; indeed, as he afterwards told me, he preferred to judge for himself in such matters. Apparently his decision was a favourable one, for he actually seemed to seek our society; and, as we for our part welcomed him warmly, we soon became quite intimate. We had known him nearly a fortnight, however, before we ascertained the nature of his business; but one day as we were travelling up to town together he mentioned casually, in the course of the conversation, that he was the chief manager of the "Pro Bono Publico Fire and Life Assurance Company."

"The 'Pro Bono Publico'?" I said. "That's a new concern, isn't it?"

"We are new, sir," he replied, with a wave of the hand; "but we are strong. Everything must have a start. We are the assurance office of the future, sir. We have unbounded capital, an influential directorate, and a strong staff, every member of which knows his work thoroughly."

"Especially the manager," I said, wishing to be polite.

"Yes," he replied. "I have been in the assurance business all my life."

"And you think the concern has a future?"

"No, I don't think—I know. There can't be a doubt of it," he replied enthusiastically, plunging his hands into his pockets, and pulling out a parcel of pamphlets. "Here, take those, and read 'em carefully; they'll convince you. And if ever you've anything to insure you come to me. We'll do you, never fear, sir—we'll do you. Take 'em home, take

'em home and read 'em. I've plenty more."

"Thank you," I said, mentally resolving to throw them away at the first opportunity. "I've no doubt they'll interest me greatly."

"Interest you! I should think they would. They'll amaze you. There are facts and figures there, Mr. Fuller, which are simply incredible. There is not an insurance office in all London conducted on the same lines as ours. Ah! and they'll find us a bit too smart for 'em before we've done with 'em. Mind you, I'm not denying it's hard work just at present. It takes time to force one's way, and we've a lot of opposition, too; but we're getting on, we're getting on. We've paid one or two heavy claims already; and such things inspire confidence. That's our motto at present—'Pay.' Never mind if the claim's a swindle even—pay! Oppose nothing at this stage of existence—pay! Discharge every claim as soon as it comes up—pay, pay, pay! A young company can't afford to fight its claims; it must first earn a reputation for prompt payment and just dealing."

"But if you're convinced a claim's a swindle—"

"What of that? If we could prove it, we might—I only say 'might,' mark you—refuse payment, of course, though we'd certainly never prosecute. But unless we had strong—I may say unimpeachable—proofs, we would pay and have done with it, even although we were quite aware we were being swindled."

"No matter the amount?" I asked incredulously.

"No matter the amount," he replied quietly.

The latter part of this conversation gave me food for thought. It was a good thing my occupation that day was not a very intellectual one, for my wits were wool-gathering all the time my mouth was tea-tasting. M'Cormick's idle words had made a serious impression on me, and already a plan was taking shape in my head—a plan suggested solely by them. For I happened to possess a tolerably large house, in a weed-grown garden of its own, and full of solid, old-fashioned furniture of the most hideous and uncomfortable description. This house—which, with the furniture, had come to me from my father, being, indeed, the only property he left behind him, save a bad name, which I

inherited also—had always seemed to me a singularly comfortless abode, and as absolutely the last place any sane man would choose to live in, so as soon as I had the chance I described it as "an eligible villa residence," and offered it for sale. But, strange to say, there were but few candidates for the prize, and their offers were so insultingly low that I withdrew Salamis House—that was its idiotic name—from the market, and established myself there in dreary state with an elderly woman as my housekeeper and maid-of-all-work. But though I had settled down, I was not content. I hated the house and everything about it, and was ever on the watch for a chance of getting rid of it, and now for the first time I seemed to see a prospect of attaining my object and making in addition a very fair profit. Why not insure it heavily and all that hideous furniture of mine? I asked myself; insure it in that "Pro Bono Publico"—M'Cormick will be only too glad to smooth away initial difficulties—and then some night have it burned down, quite by accident, of course! The idea struck me as quaint and ingenious, and the more I thought of it, the more I liked it. It would be a capital start to my career as a swindler, and there was something that tickled me greatly in the resemblance to the decisive operation of burning one's boats behind one. Before I had returned to Lulchester that night I had determined to become an incendiary!

At first I naturally determined to keep such a splendid plan all to myself, but want of funds—that curse of Genius!—forced me to adopt a different course. I could not carry out my brilliant idea unaided, simply because I hadn't the cash for the necessary expenses; and so I was reluctantly compelled to lay the matter before my friends O'Rourke, Griggs, and Johnson.

The dear fellows hailed my proposal with enthusiasm. O'Rourke swore—he always did—that it was the smartest thing he had ever heard of; Griggs admitted that nothing could be better, and Johnson declared that he had always said there was something in me. I thanked them for their flattering remarks, and then went on to say that, as they all approved so highly of the scheme, I would be glad to hear how much they proposed to subscribe for the working expenses. But here I failed to carry my audience with me. O'Rourke remarked that he would be—well, boiled,

before he threw away his money on such a crack-brained project; Griggs would not have a penny to spare till next quarter-day at least; and Johnson had had a terribly bad time at Newmarket, and hadn't a feather left to fly with. Many people would have been disheartened at this, but I knew my friends. I was well aware that they were merely dissatisfied with the share of the profits that I offered them in exchange for their capital and services, so I resumed the attack, raising my offers by degrees, arguing and persuading, until we arrived at a settlement. A fair value was set on my property, and all realised above that was to be equally divided among the four of us; while on their side they would give their money to the extent of their purses, and their personal services to any extent required. This business amicably concluded, I sent out for a bottle of whisky, and we drank the toast of "our noble selves," with three times three.

"This is a memorable evening," cried Johnson; "it is the real start of our careers. At last we have made a beginning."

"Bedad, it was time," growled O'Rourke, who did not confine himself to "bedad," however.

"You're right, Paddy," said Griggs. "We ought to have started years ago. Life is short and one's working days are shorter. Besides, you ought to save up for old age, you know, and you can't start to do that too early. I have a dread of being left destitute in my old age—without a home in my declining years."

Dear little Griggs! It is pleasant to be able to state that, quite lately, a home has been found for him in his declining years, thanks to the recommendation of certain charitable gentlemen who took an interest in his case. They were twelve in number.

Next day I met M'Cormick in the train and told him that I had carefully read his pamphlets, which had fully convinced me that the man who did not insure his property was a fool, but that the insurer who did not insure in the "Pro Bono" was a hopeless lunatic.

"Now, I don't think I'm either a fool or a lunatic," I concluded, "and so I've come to you to ask how I'm to set about the preliminaries."

"That's right, my boy," he cried; "you couldn't have come to a man more willing to help you. The 'Pro Bono's' your shop, sir; it's going ahead of all competition.

Some day it'll go right away altogether, and they'll never be able to catch it up again. Mark my words and see if they don't come true. But call round at the office about midday and we'll go into your matter thoroughly."

At twelve, accordingly, I arrived at the "Pro Bono" office, which was on the second floor of a lofty building in the City. It was beautifully fitted up with brass plates, swinging glass doors, mahogany counters, thick carpets, and a luxurious waiting-room for visitors, but I had afterwards cause to suspect that the rooms were better than the company. The staff was small—"small but select," M'Cormick said—apparently consisting of two clerks and a boy in the most "buttony" livery I had ever seen in my life. This gorgeous apparition conducted me to the waiting-room, handed me the advertisement sheet of "The Times," and withdrew; but before I had time to get thoroughly interested in the literature so thoughtfully provided, he returned to tell me that Mr. M'Cormick would see me, and then led the way to the still more luxurious office, where my friend awaited me. He welcomed me warmly, produced some excellent sherry, and then, coming to business, gave me some forms to fill up at my leisure and made another appointment for an early day. I felt quite affected when I left him. He was so good-tempered, so simple, so confiding, and, alas! I was about to betray him. I was young, then, you must remember, and had, moreover, drunk the greater part of the bottle of sherry. My conscience—yes, I had one then!—pricked me and I really felt quite sorry for the innocent old simpleton who was fool enough to trust me. To tell the truth, I am somewhat ashamed of those sentimental ideas now, but I merely mention them to show that no man is perfect. Nowadays, of course, such stupid scruples never trouble me. I know that when a man has embarked on my profession he cannot afford to pick and choose his victims; he must take the first that comes to hand and be glad to get them, for swindling is a serious business and no mere amusement; in short, to parody Johnson's line—Samuel Johnson's, by the way, not Jack Johnson's—"those who live to fleece must fleece to live." But at that time I had not grasped the eternal truth that lies in that maxim.

However, though my heart was soft my head was luckily hard, and the preparations went swiftly on. Salamis House and



the furniture were insured at more than three times their real value, the somewhat heavy premium was paid, and M'Cormick gave a little supper to celebrate the satisfactory termination of our first business transaction. After this we saw very little of him, probably because I was still weak enough to feel somewhat ashamed and ill at ease in his presence, and did my best to avoid him, when I could do so without attracting undue attention.

So the months went on until the time for our great enterprise—our first flight—drew near. It was Little Griggs—there was plenty of low cunning about Griggs—who advised us to defer the matter till a few days after the second payment on the policy, thus disarming suspicion by paying a good sum of money immediately before the fire; and as O'Rourke and Johnson backed him up, I had to yield, though I did so reluctantly, feeling convinced that it was sheer waste of money. I knew simple old M'Cormick, blind as a bat in more ways than one, and I was sure that Griggs's crafty arrangement would not affect our prospects of prompt payment one way or the other. And I was quite right; it didn't.

Our plan was simple in the extreme. As we did not wish to burn the house-keeper—she was not insured—and as she was so old and deaf that otherwise she would have been in some peril, we determined that the affair should take place in her absence, if possible. Now, once in every six months she went up to London to visit some relations, and as those were her only holidays in the year she naturally made the most of them, staying in town till the last train, which did not reach Lulchester till after midnight. Luckily one of her festivals was due just about the time we had already fixed on as suitable, and accordingly we decided to take advantage of it. The old woman had a key to let herself in, so what was more natural than that I should go to bed about half-past ten, leaving a paraffin-oil lamp alight on the table for her convenience? Unfortunately such lamps are notoriously dangerous and the frequent cause of accident, especially when there happens to be a cat in the house, and the table on which the lamp stands happens to be somewhat shaky. Now, I happen to possess a cat with a perfect genius for knocking things over, and a table literally on its last legs; if an accident should result, there would surely be no one to blame but

the cat—and cats have broad backs as well as nine lives. Supposing that such an accident occurred, who would be more likely to be passing my way, just at the time the flames became visible, than Little Griggs, who lived within a few hundred yards of me? He would of course give the alarm, and when the people began to arrive, I, roused suddenly from my sleep, would be forced to escape through the window in my night-shirt. Such is a rough outline of our scheme, and certainly it was simple enough—indeed, I thought the attire part of it altogether too simple. It was winter, and the nights were cold, so I begged hard for a little extra clothing; but my friends were firm and gave a strong refusal—O'Rourke's was particularly strong, I remember. Griggs evidently expressed the sense—or want of it—of the company when he declared:

"Small details are the important features of such a plot, Harry. Think what a sensation you will make, wakened from slumber by the roar of the flames, without even time to throw a blanket round you! Indeed, if you would only consent to stay in the house long enough to have the tail of the garment singed by the flames——"

"Confound you, Griggs!" I cried. "Perhaps you'd like me to allow myself to be burned alive, just to make things more realistic?"

Griggs looked as if he wouldn't object to such an arrangement, but he said nothing.

"Understand me, all of you," I went on, "I draw the line there. You've left me little enough raiment, as it is!"

"Well, well," said Griggs pettishly, "there's no need to make such a fuss about a trifle. But we must have the simple night-dress; it will impress the crowd so favourably. As for the cold, you'll be supposed to be too excited to care for such a minor detail. You must be running about, giving orders, directing where to throw the water, and looking after everything. You understand?"

I understood. I was to rush about for hours "dressed in a little brief authority," and not much else. The prospect was not an inviting one, but though I disputed the point stubbornly for nearly a week, the only concession they made was to give me permission to wear, in addition, a pair of socks. But socks, "*et præterea nihil*," was their ultimatum.

I will not dwell upon the events of the great night; one fire is so like another.

Suffice it to say that everything went off capitally—especially the house. It was an old, old place; the woodwork, of which there was a great quantity, was as dry as tinder, and therefore the fire, when fairly alight, burned with such rapidity that I was obliged to beat a retreat through the window before many people had collected. But I distinguished myself greatly in the subsequent operations. Wherever the press was thickest, wherever the struggle against the flames was being waged with most activity, there, like the helmet of Navarre at the battle of Ivry, my white garment could be seen fluttering in the foreground. But all our exertions were in vain. We had no engine to assist us, for though Lulchester boasted one it was securely locked up in its shed, the key of which had been mislaid, and the buckets employed as a substitute were as useful as so many boys' squirts. In an incredibly short space of time Salamis House had been gutted, and I had gone off to Johnson's house to seek the repose and, above all, the warmth of which I stood so much in need.

Next morning I was unable to rise, and the doctor was sent for, but on the whole I was happy. At last I had made a start! I was no longer a foolish trifler, a mere tea-taster; in future I would sample men and make my living out of them! So I passed the day, lying in bed and dreaming golden day-dreams till, in the evening, Griggs and O'Rourke came home with Johnson and spent a few pleasant hours in my room, drinking, playing cards, and smoking. We were all a little excited by our success, and even O'Rourke, a lazy rascal in general, confessed that he had wandered down to the building in which the "Pro Bono" office was, and had stood for nearly an hour surveying it with much of the veneration old country ladies with dividends feel for the Bank of England. The "Pro Bono" office had been closed that day, to be sure, so that he was unable to view the interior, but it never entered his head to ask why the shutters were up; and indeed none of us thought much about the matter. No doubt there was some good reason for it; and in any case we did not want their attention for some days to come. They'd be there when we needed them; the office—ha! ha!—couldn't run away!

Unfortunately the tenant could—and did. The next evening—I was still confined to my room—Johnson, Griggs, and

O'Rourke dashed in, hot, angry, and abusive.

"A fine mess you've made of things," snarled Johnson. "I always said you were a fool!"

"That M'Cormick of yours turns out to be nothing but a swindler," squeaked Griggs.

O'Rourke said—but no; never mind what O'Rourke said.

"What are you saying?" I murmured. "What does all this mean?" I went on in a croak, for I had lost my voice with the rest of my property. "Are you all mad? Have you lost your senses?"

"No, but we've lost our shekels," snapped Griggs. "That M'Cormick of yours has bolted!"

"Bolted! And the 'Pro Bono Publico'?"

"A disgraceful fraud," said Johnson; "a robbery, sir; a barefaced and unmitigated swindle, that's what the 'Pro Bono Publico' is!"

"Where are the police?" Griggs chimed in. "What can they be about to allow such a thing? And this in the nineteenth century! Why, it sickens me!"

"There must be some mistake," I gasped.

"A thundering big one," said Johnson, "and you made it. You'll find out all about it in this paper. The man M'Cormick seems to have started for the Continent on the very day of your disgraceful fiasco, and nothing but half a brick has been found in the safe. As there are several hundred creditors, the dividend is not expected to be a large one."

"And you're responsible for this," said Griggs. "You discovered this scoundrel M'Cormick, and transacted all the business with him. Had I been in your place, I flatter myself I'd have found him out in no time."

"I always did say," remarked Johnson, to no one in particular, "that there was something queer about the man."

"I really think," Griggs went on, "that as you let us in for this, you ought to make it up to us. What do you say, boys?"

"Make it up to you!" I croaked. "Haven't I lost my house, my furniture and belongings, my very clothes? And you ask me to make up your losses! Why, I'm a long way the biggest——"

A double knock below cut short my protest, and a minute later the servant appeared with a letter, which had been

addressed to me at Salamis House, but brought on to Johnson's by the postman. The handwriting was strange to me, and the postage-stamp was foreign; the post-mark was "Paris." I tore the envelope open and read what follows:

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I have taken advantage of a short halt on my way to Spain—a most interesting country, which I have always wished to visit—to write you a line, thanking you for your kindness in paying the second instalment of the insurance money. It has come in very handy. I must say, however, that I hardly expected to receive it, as I was afraid—young men are so careless—that some accident would happen to your house before the money became due. An insurance policy in certain hands is as dangerous as a pipe in a powder-magazine.

"Have you heard any news about me yet? I have had several heavy claims sent in to the 'Pro Bono' during the past week, and as it was always my intention to retire very shortly, I seized the opportunity and all the funds of the company, which was, indeed, merely a fancy name for myself. The claims, I need hardly say, must settle themselves. I intend to settle myself—in Spain. You ask me, perhaps, why I condescended to swindle you out of your two paltry little payments? Really I could not resist the temptation. Little fish are proverbially sweet, and, in addition, I wished to teach you a lesson. You wish to run before you can walk, and strive to grasp the highest prizes in the profession before you have even matriculated. That is absurd, and I hope that I have taught you to know better. But I never work for nothing, so I took your money as a kind of fee. Two hints to conclude with. Get over your habit of blushing, for you will never be a swindler while you can blush for yourself, and bear in mind that men who wear blue spectacles are not necessarily fools.—Yours, etc.,

"ALEXANDER M'CORMICK,  
"Alias Robert Turner, alias Shifty Bob"

"Shifty Bob!" cried Griggs; "the most notorious rascal in London!"

"I've heard of the man," said Johnson. "And the police allow a well-known scoundrel like that to prey upon society unchecked. I call it simply scandalous!"

Shifty Bob! A past-master of the art. And I had tried to swindle him. What a fool he must have thought me! What a fool I had been! Why, when I came to look back and recalled some of his remarks, I could see that he had hardly condescended to deceive me; he had been contemptuously amusing himself with me the whole time. Yet I had gone gaily on, revelling in my fancied success, and had laughed to myself while house, furniture, and belongings were destroyed before my eyes. Now they were gone, together with all my ready money—not to speak of Johnson and Co.'s—and I was left lamenting. As I thought of all this, I felt that nothing I could say would do justice to the situation.

"O'Rourke," I said feebly, turning instinctively to that tower of strength, "O'Rourke, say something."

And O'Rourke did!

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

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#### CHAPTER XLI.

"MR. FALCONER, sir! Mr. Falconer!"

Dennis Falconer was a light sleeper, and he was awake on the first call, low and hurried as it was. It must be a very bad morning, he said to himself, for the light was not nearly so strong as it usually was when he was called at eight o'clock.

"All right!" he called back.

But the retreating footsteps that usually ensued upon his answer did not follow.

"There's a lady, sir, to see you, please. She's waiting in the sitting-room. 'Mrs. Romaine,' she told me to say."

"What!" It was a sharp exclamation of inexpressible astonishment, and as he uttered it Falconer sprang out of bed. As he did so he realised that the unusualness of the light was due to the unusualness of the hour—seven o'clock only. "Some one from Mrs. Romaine, you mean?" he called, his strong, deep voice full of incredulity and apprehension. Then, as the answer came through the door, "'Mrs. Romaine,' sir, the lady said," he called back hurriedly: "Say I will be with her in a moment."

Very few moments indeed had passed before Falconer's bedroom door opened and he came out with a rapid step. He opened his sitting-room door and passed in, shutting the door hastily behind him, and as he did so the words of grave concern with which he had entered died upon his lips.

In the disorder and dreariness of a room from which the traces of yesterday's usage had not yet been obliterated, in the cold grey light of the early September morning, a woman was pacing up and down with almost frenzied steps. For a moment, as he caught his first glimpse of the face, he thought vaguely that it was not Mrs. Romaine; then it turned and confronted him, and, meeting the eyes, he recognised, not the woman whom he had known during the past two years, but the woman into whose face he had looked with so strange a shock of unfamiliarity, and for one moment only, as he and Dr. Aston had confronted it together twenty years ago in Nice. Every trace of the Mrs. Romaine of to-day seemed to have vanished, scorched away by the consuming fire which burnt in her blue eyes and seemed to be the only thing that lived behind that ghastly face; even her features were drawn and sunken almost beyond recognition.

An almost paralysing sense of unreality fell upon Dennis Falconer for all his practical common sense; and before he could recover himself sufficiently for speech, Mrs. Romaine had crossed the room to him, attempting no greeting, swept away on a tide before which all the barriers of her life—all the safeguards, as they had seemed to her—had gone down in one common ruin.

"Dennis Falconer," she cried hoarsely, "my boy is gone—gone! Help me to think what I must do—help me to think how I can find him! Help me! Help me!"

The words themselves were an appeal, but they rang out in that harsh, untuned voice with all the fierce peremptoriness of a command, and as she spoke them Mrs. Romaine beat her hands one against the

other, as though her agony were indeed too great to be endured. Falconer, utterly confounded—more by her manner than by her tidings, which, indeed, in his slow and bewildered sense of the extraordinarily direct communication which her words had established between herself and him, he hardly grasped—echoed the one word which seemed to contain a definite statement.

"Gone?" he said. "Gone?"

"Gone!" she returned, repeating the word as she had done before in a kind of hoarse cry. "Oh, let me try and make you understand clearly that we may lose no time. Time! Ah! who knows how much may have been lost already! My boy! my boy!"

She strangled the cry in her very throat, and laying one hand on Falconer's arm with a convulsive grip, as if to steady herself, she lifted the other to her head, pushing the hair back from her forehead and pressing her fingers down as though to force herself to think and speak coherently.

"I had a telegram from him," she said, speaking in short, quick sentences with heavy, panting breaths between, "ten days ago. It said that he was going to stop in town for a few days. Yesterday I heard something that made me uneasy. I came up to speak to him late last night. I expected to find him in Queen Anne Street. He was not there. He has not been there for the last two nights. He is gone!" She stopped as though in those three words she had summed up all the horror of the situation, and with that strange sense of unreality making his voice stiff and constrained, Falconer said:

"But must you necessarily apprehend anything alarming? Some private visit, perhaps; a painful discovery, of course——"

She tore her hand away from his arm, wringing it fiercely with its fellow as she faced him, breaking in upon his words with a passionate cry.

"Apprehend! I know, I tell you, I know! Ah! have I been watching and fighting for so many years; have I planned and struggled and sickened with fear; not to know, now that it has overtaken me at last? Dennis Falconer, don't palter with me. You know what lies about my boy. You know what horrible inheritance I have had to battle with for him. Good Heaven! when have you spared me your knowledge of it? When have you failed to thrust it on me, to force me to

shudder and sicken even when I felt most secure?"

She paused, battling for breath; and then, as Falconer tried to speak, she put out her hand to stop him, and went on hurriedly:

"That's all over! It's done with! Now you must help me. Your knowledge must help me. You are a man. You will know what to do; how he can be saved! He must be saved! He must!"

She turned away from him with a wild, unconscious gesture, as though his personality had no existence for her save and except as he could serve her purpose, and began once more to pace up and down the room.

Falconer followed her with his eyes, standing motionless and confounded. The very foundation on which stood his every conception with regard to the woman before him, and the life she lived, had suddenly melted into nothingness before her passionate words, and there seemed for the time being to be no stability anywhere about him. It was no light that her words let in upon him. Rather, they rolled over that mental tract of country which had been to him perfectly familiar and commonplace, a darkness in which every landmark was obliterated. In those first bewildered seconds his most prominent sensation was one of utter blackness—the mental counterpart of the effect produced upon the physical vision by the sudden substitution of illimitable darkness for a narrow and well-known scene.

"What do you fear?" he said. He spoke almost like an automaton, in a low, tentative tone.

"He has been speculating." She never stopped in her rushing walk. "I have known it for months, and have been in torment." There was a strange scathed look on her face which gave the words a terrible reality. "He has had some heavy anxiety on his mind all the summer—what, I don't know. But this is the end of it. Oh, my boy, my darling, what have I done that you should shut your mother out? I have slaved for you! I have slaved for you, and I will slave for you as long as I live! Why have you gone away from me?"

She was not crying. To Falconer, watching her and listening to her, no tears could have been so terrible as that bitter, dry-eyed wail which seemed to him to echo in a void, where nothing answering to it could have been nurtured into life. The contrast between the artificial woman

he had known hitherto, and the woman in the consuming anguish of her motherhood with whom he now found himself face to face, was so amazing that he could make no attempt to grapple with it. He took desperate and instinctive refuge in the practical.

"Do you know anything of his City association?" he said.

She made a despairing gesture of negation.

"I did!" she said hoarsely. "I did all I knew to keep in touch with him. Two months ago Marston Loring could have told me anything. But everything failed me! Everything crumbled away! They quarrelled."

Already, with that matter-of-fact tendency inherent in all men—and particularly, perhaps, in unimaginative men—which assimilates a revelation, and reduces it involuntarily to a commonplace, Falconer had become almost accustomed to the new point of view which had been forced upon him. The darkness was lifting, and he was aware of the vast tracts of mental country, destitute of those landmarks which his soul loved, but no longer enveloped in a dense atmosphere of confusion.

A man of Falconer's narrow temperament, confirmed in his rigidity by many years of life, having his set conceptions suddenly overthrown and forcibly enlarged, will be totally incapable of any just appreciation of the new horizon then created; he will be conscious of the spaces about him only as confusing unrealities; the limitations solidified by the mental habits of years will retain some sort of ghostly influence over him long after they have ceased to have any actual existence. His first conscious and deliberate movement will be an instinctive attempt to reconcile the new condition of things with these old limitations, rather than to reconcile himself with his new condition. The facts which Mrs. Romayne's words recalled to him; the character of the man whom she had encouraged as her son's chief intimate; the character of the life to which she had bred him; gave definite force to the vague movement towards such reconciliation already stirring in Falconer's mind. He accepted the revelation of unsuspected mother's love and mother's dread, and ceased to contemplate it as he concentrated his mental vision on the selfish vanity and worldliness with which Mrs. Romayne

had stood endued in his thoughts for twenty years; and as his point of view readjusted itself on these lines, her present position, with all the suffering which it involved, presented itself to him solely as the inevitable climax of a simple and eminently comprehensible sequence of cause and effect.

His voice was low and stern as he said:

"Can you not think of any other friend who could give us some clue to his recent movements?"

"I can't!" she cried, stopping in her rapid walk, and confronting him fiercely. "It is because there is no one left; because I don't know what to do, or where to turn, that I have come to you! Should I be wasting time like this if I could think of any other means of acting? I'm tied hand and foot in the dark—tied to the rack, man! We can do nothing till we find him—till we know what has happened. Think, think, think! How are we to find him? How are we to——"

Her voice, which had risen into an agonised cry, broke suddenly; a greyish tint spread itself over her face, and all her features were contorted as if with horrible physical pain. She stretched out her hand feebly and gropingly, caught at an arm-chair, and fell into it, letting her face fall forward on its back as her nails pressed themselves pitilessly into her thin hands.

"It—it's nothing!" she gasped, in a tight, suppressed voice, fighting desperately, as it seemed, to utter words rather than groans. "I have been ill! The night——"

The words died away, caught and strangled by the relentless stabbing pain, and Falconer, utterly at a loss, stood for a moment helplessly watching her, and then strode across the room meaning to call a woman to his aid. He opened the door hurriedly and then stopped short. On the shelf fixed against the wall facing him there lay his morning letters, and on the top of the pile lay one directed in Julian's handwriting. Mrs. Romayne's physical distress sank into insignificance for him. The physical suffering which had fallen to his lot during the past year had by no means obliterated the lifelong instinct which led him to look upon such weakness as a detail to be disregarded, and of women he knew nothing. He turned back into the room with the letter in his hand, and shutting the door again opened it hastily. It was the

letter Julian had written on the previous day in his room in the Temple.

"DEAR FALCONER," he read,—*"I've done for myself all round, and by the time you get this I shall be out of England. It's penal servitude if I stay. The smash will come in a day or two and you will understand. It's all up with me; but there's my wife and child—for Heaven's sake be kind to them. My wife is living at——."* (The address was scrawled in pencil).

"JULIAN ROMAYNE,"

For another moment Dennis Falconer stood motionless with his eyes fixed on the letter, so despairing in its hopeless brevity, so terribly eloquent of immeasurable disgrace and wrong. Then he lifted his head and turned towards Mrs. Romayne. She had not moved, she was apparently unconscious of his presence; the tense rigidity of her position had passed into a total collapse, in which all her figure seemed to have fallen together as if in absolute exhaustion. To Falconer she presented an appearance only of most desirable quiet, and he hesitated simply as to how he should so break to her what must be broken, as to excite her least. She would have to see the letter! He glanced at it again on the thought, and a cold shock seemed to strike him as he realised the total oblivion of his mother to which the young man's last appeal bore witness.

"I have received some news," he said.

His tone, as he spoke, was curiously different from any in which he had ever before addressed her. It was grave, straightforward, and not unkindly, and it very subtly—and quite unconsciously—conveyed the altered attitude of a stern and narrow moralist towards wrong-doing, no longer triumphant and serene, but writhing under its merited suffering. A certain stern compassion the new position of affairs demanded of him, and he gave it; but it was that lofty compassion which is more than half composed of a sense of the righteousness of the retribution meted out, and with sympathy or respect it was utterly untouched. He was prepared to help her to the utmost; he was steady reliability itself, but his help was permeated, as was his compassion, with a superior recognition of the justice of the trouble which rendered that help necessary.

As though there was something between her and her surroundings through which

his voice must penetrate before it reached her brain, a second or two elapsed before Mrs. Romayne gave any sign of having heard him. Then she moved and turned her face towards him, looking at him as though from a long way off. Her forehead and the hair about it, strangely colourless and dead-looking, were damp. Grey shadows had fallen about her mouth. There was a faint struggle in her dull eyes, as though she had heard his words and was trying to force her way to an understanding of them through overwhelming physical disabilities.

"I am sorry to say it is far from reassuring," continued Falconer.

A sudden flash of understanding and conviction flashed across her features, and its spirit dominated her weakness as its light transfigured her face. She rose, clinging to the chair, but evidently absolutely unconscious of any physical sensation, and held out her hand, still clammy and tremulous with pain.

"Give it me," she said, indicating the letter he held. Her voice was a thin whisper. Then, as he hesitated: "You're wasting time. Give it me."

He gave it her without a word and turned away. It would break her down, of course, he thought; perhaps into some wild form of hysteria at the position in which the young man confessed himself; perhaps into passionate repudiation of the son who had so deceived her, and who was leaving her without word or sign. Moments passed, three or four perhaps, and then a tense, insistent touch fell on his arm and he turned. Mrs. Romayne was standing by his side, Julian's letter held tightly in her hand, which trembled no longer. Her eyes were bright, almost hard in their determination, and every line and muscle of her face and figure was braced and set into a vivid strength and resolution.

"We must see this woman at once," she said, and her voice was as strange in its desperate energy as was her face. Then, as Falconer only looked at her blankly, she added, in the same absorbed, concentrated way: "You will come with me?"

"You mean you will see——"

"I must see this woman," she repeated, tapping the paper impatiently with her hand. "Don't you see she will probably know where he is? She must know! Let us go at once!"

"But if she does know?"

"If she does know! Why, that is

everything! I can follow him. He is frightened—he has lost his head. If he goes away like this he is lost. I am going to stop him.”

“But——”

She silenced him with a movement of her hand, before which his words died on his lips.

“Dennis Falconer,” she said, “help me or refuse to help me as you like, but don’t try to stop me. The shadow of a horror such as this has haunted me for twenty years. I bring the nerve and desperation of twenty years to meet it now, and I am going to save him. Will you come?”

Dominated against his will, sternly disapproving, but powerless to assert his disapprobation in the face of the intensity of her determination, Falconer made a slight gesture of enforced assent. Mrs. Romaine hardly waited for it before she turned and went swiftly out of the room and down the stairs.

It was early still—not yet eight o’clock—and cabs were hardly to be found. They met one at last, and Falconer put her into it and looked at her, obviously with an intention of uttering the protest with which his face was full. She made a peremptory sign that he should give the address, holding out the letter containing it, and instantly reclaiming it. Her nerves were evidently strung beyond the possibility of irrelevant or unnecessary speech. A long drive followed to a dingy, poverty-stricken neighbourhood, and then, in a dreary-looking little street, the cab stopped. Mrs. Romaine got out with the same rapid, concentrated movements, signing again, with a movement of her set lips, to Falconer that he should ring and make the necessary enquiries. The bell was answered, after an appreciable interval, by a slatternly-looking girl.

“A young woman lodges here, I believe,” said Falconer sternly—“a young married woman. Mrs.—Mrs. Roden, or Romaine?”

The girl stared at him for a moment with bold, curious eyes, and then transferred the stare to Mrs. Romaine, with a coarse giggle.

“Young married woman?” she repeated, with a toss of the head. “Oh, yes; of course! Top floor back!”

Before the last words, which conveyed a general intimation that visitors for the top floor back were expected to show themselves up, were well uttered, Mrs. Romaine had crossed the dirty little passage with swift steps and was mounting the stairs.

She went straight on until she reached the top landing, and then she turned sharply to Falconer, who had followed her closely. His judgement condemned her proceedings utterly, but his stern sense of her claim upon him remained untouched, and he believed himself to be merely waiting until her impulse should fall her, as it seemed to him it must before long, to take matters into his own hands.

“Knock!” she said.

Falconer obeyed her; the door was opened with a quiet, sad-toned “Yes?” and Clemence stood on the threshold.

She was looking very fragile and very white; the haggard look of suffering had left her, but it had taken with it in the passing all the physical strength from her face. Her eyes were heavy as with sleeplessness and tears, and from their depths there seemed to emanate the quiet grief which spoke in every line of her face. She held her month-old baby in her arms, and her whole personality seemed to be touched by the mysterious influence of motherhood into a new dignity and beauty. To Falconer the change in her since he had seen her in Camden Town was so great as to give him a moment’s absolute shock; it was the same woman, and yet not the same. The difference lay, for him, rather in the evidences of long suffering which spoke so eloquently about that patient woman’s face and form, than in the work effected by that suffering, and the feeling that the sight of her stirred in him was one of pity; a man’s half indignant, half patronising pity for weakness and trust abused.

But Falconer she did not seem to see. Instantly, as she opened the door, her eyes had passed to where Mrs. Romaine stood confronting her, her face absorbed, concentrated, hard as steel. A faint flush of colour flooded Clemence’s face; then she lowered her eyes, and stood with her head a little bent over her child, motionless.

“You are my son’s wife?”

The words came from Mrs. Romaine quick, terse, utterly untouched and unemotional, as though the situation in itself were absolutely devoid of meaning for her.

“My husband’s name is Julian Romaine,” was the low answer.

Mrs. Romaine made a quick, imperious gesture indicative of her desire to pass into the little room, on the threshold of which Clemence was standing. Clemence made way for her with quiet dignity, and



then followed her in. Falconer hesitated an instant and then took up his position in the doorway, holding himself in grave, attentive readiness until the moment when his presence should be required. The little room was scrupulously neat and clean. Facing him, a strangely incongruous figure amid such poor surroundings, but apparently as absolutely unconscious of them as of the child—at which she never glanced—stood Mrs. Romayne. Facing Mrs. Romayne stood Clemence, paler now than before, and with her head bent a little lower. Falconer could see that she trembled slightly. Mrs. Romayne began to speak instantly, in the same hard, rapid tone.

"Where is my son?" she said. "You have been told, perhaps, to say you do not know—to keep his plans secret. You must give them up instantly to me. He has made a mistake, and only prompt action can redeem it. When did you see him last? What did he tell you?"

As though some subtle influence from the one woman had penetrated to the heart of the other, Clemence's face had turned quite white. For her, too, the personal aspect of the situation seemed suddenly to sink into abeyance. Her head was lifted, and her eyes, filled with a creeping apprehension, were fixed full upon Mrs. Romayne, oblivious of anything but the one interest which they held in common.

The man watching them was vaguely conscious of something about the two women which put him quite away from them; which made him the merest spectator of something to which he had no key.

"I saw him last night," said Clemence, hurriedly and fearfully; "he came to say good-bye!"

A kind of hoarse cry broke from Mrs. Romayne.

"Good-bye!" she cried, as though appealing to some encircling environment of fate. "And she let him go! She let him go!" She stopped herself, forcing down her passion with an iron hand, and went on in a tone really colder and more decisive in its greater rapidity than before. "He has made a mistake; you cannot understand, of course. No doubt it seems to you that everything to be desired is comprised in the miserable subterfuge of flight. No doubt——"

She was interrupted. With a low cry of unutterable horror Clemence had drawn a step nearer to her, pressing her baby passionately to her heart.

"Flight!" she cried. "Flight! Ah, I knew! I knew there was something wrong! What is it? Oh, what is it? My dear, my dear, what have you done? What have you done?"

There was an instant's dead silence as the cry died away and Clemence stood with her beseeching eyes dark and dilated, her uplifted face white and quivering, appealing, as it seemed, for an answer from Julian himself. Falconer was looking straight before him, his face set and grim, passive, not only with the natural passivity of a man in the presence of inevitable anguish, but with the involuntary self-forgetfulness of a man in the presence of a power greater than he can understand. Mrs. Romayne had paused as though stopped by some kind of hard, annoyed surprise.

Then Mrs. Romayne went on in a thin, tense voice:

"There is no time to waste over what has been done; the point is to retrieve it! He must come back at once. Where is he?"

With a sudden quick movement Clemence turned, crossed the room, and laid the child tenderly in the little cot standing by the fire. She pressed her face down for one instant to the tiny sleep-flushed cheek, and then rose and came back to Mrs. Romayne and Falconer, her face white and resolute, her eyes shining, glancing from one to the other as she spoke.

"Will there be time?" she said. "Can I get to him before he sails? There is a woman downstairs who will take care of my child. He is alone! He may be doing—— Flight! What can flight do for him if he has done wrong? He doesn't always know! I am his wife, and I must go and help him. Will there be time?"

It was to Falconer to whom her eyes finally turned, vaguely conscious of the absence of womanly sympathy, and appealing in the void for a man's knowledge and assistance. It was Falconer who answered her. Instinctively and involuntarily he answered her directly, the current of his thoughts seeming to submit itself to hers without an impulse to resist or control her.

"Where was he going?" he said.

"To America!" was the answer, eager and low, as though life and death hung on the response it should elicit. "He was going then he told me. That was at nine

o'clock last night! Oh, if I go at once I shall be in time! I shall be in time!"

A hard, nervous irritation was disturbing the concentration of Mrs. Romayne's face. Futile and utterly to be ignored as seemed to her any impulse on the part of the woman to whom, in face of the terrible issues with which she stood confronted, she gave no personal consideration whatever; the introduction of such futility seemed, in the strained, tense condition of her nerves, to involve irrelevancy and delay, which she was utterly unable to meet with any self-command. She broke in now, her voice harsh and vibrating with uncontrollable impatience.

"There is no need," she said. "I am on my way to him now. You—there is no need for you! You can do nothing!"

"I am his wife!" said Clemence.

She did not raise her voice; no colour came to her dead, white face; only she turned to Julian's mother, with her hands crushed tightly together against her heart, and such a light shining in her eyes as seemed to transfigure her whole face and figure. For an instant the eyes of the two women met and held one another. Then Mrs. Romayne, with a gesture which seemed to repudiate and deny the influence which nevertheless she was powerless to resist, turned to Falconer and moved swiftly towards the door. "What does it matter?" she said, in a tone of fierce impatience, which relegated Clemence to the position of the merest nonentity. "The only thing of consequence is time!"

She swept out of the room as she spoke, and Clemence turned again to Falconer, stretching out beseeching hands.

"Help me!" she said.

The movement which he had thought to guide and control so easily had passed beyond Falconer's control, and he knew it. He could only follow it, waiting until the turn of events should throw it, as he still believed they must, upon a man's strength and experience. But as Clemence had touched him once before against his will, she touched him now against his judgement, and he answered her in one word:

"Come!"

Throughout the terrible hours that followed; during the drive to the station, the sickening suspense, the brief interval of waiting for a train, the long journey; neither by word nor sign did Mrs. Romayne evince the slightest consciousness of Clemence's presence. Her face, almost stony now in its set determination, never

altered. After they were seated in the train she never spoke at all. She sat gazing straight before her, motionless as a statue, like a woman living only by her hold upon a moment in the future, to which each present second as it passed was bringing her nearer.

There had been no time to ascertain the probabilities as to their forestalling the sailing of the boat in which Julian had presumably intended to leave England. Falconer, while admitting to himself that the young man might have over-estimated, panic-stricken, the danger in which he had placed himself, had but faint hope that any steps other than the promotion of his speedy departure would be possible when they should be in possession of the facts, even should their arrival be in time to frustrate his original determination. But Mrs. Romayne weighed no probabilities. She looked neither to the right nor to the left. She saw before her only the climax and consummation of the struggle of twenty years, and on that consummation was concentrated her whole existence.

## IMPERIAL DINNERS.—II.

### MORE IMPERIAL DINNERS.

A SOMEWHAT different version of the striking incident which closed our article "Imperial Dinners, No. 1," is supplied by Spartianus, which might furnish a companion picture to the one I have suggested—the lighted halls half filled with soldiers; the Imperial domestics hurrying to and fro with the materials of the hasty banquet; the dead body of Pertinax lying neglected on the marble floor, while Julianus, surrounded by flatterers, reclined on the gorgeously cushioned lectum. A different version is supplied by Spartianus, who says: "They who from the first began to hate Julianus spread the report that from the despised 'cœna' of Pertinax he turned immediately to a sumptuous banquet which had been got ready of oysters, fowls, and fish—'luxuriosum parâsse convivium ostris et alitibus et piscibus adornatum.' This is wholly false; for his habits were so parsimonious that he would make a hare or a sucking-pig last him for three days, when any one sent him such a present. Often, too, when bound by no religious duty, he would be content with a dish of vegetables and no meat. Nor on the first night did he dine until Pertinax had been buried, on account of whose murder he took his

meal very sorrowfully, and overwhelmed with anxiety passed a sleepless night."

It is to be observed, however, that Dio Cassius was a contemporary of Julianus, while Spartianus flourished a century later. Perhaps, for this very reason, we ought to adopt the latter's statement, since it is always one's contemporaries who are the worst informed about one's actions.

Julianus enjoyed—if, indeed, he can truly be said to have enjoyed them—only sixty-five dinners in his Imperial character. On the sixty-sixth day he was beheaded by order of Septimius Severus, who then reigned in his stead. Severus gave excellent dinners, not because he cared for culinary delicacies, but because it was politic to entertain his senators and officers; his individual taste was for building. However, his guests were generally men of real distinction, and included such eminent lawyers or jurists as Paulus, Papinian, and Ulpian. His two sons and successors, Geta and Bassianus—the latter best known by the contemptuous nickname of Caracalla—cordially hated one another, and never ate at the same table. They divided between them the vast buildings and domains of the Imperial palace, Geta residing in the Janiculum and Caracalla in the Esquiline, until the fraternal feud was terminated by Geta's murder. Geta, I may add, was something of an epicure, and kept a good cook.

The luxuriousness of Elagabalus has passed into a commonplace. It is probable that both his follies and his vices have been exaggerated, but after due allowance has been made for misrepresentation, enough remains to justify the detestation and contempt he has inspired, the former by his cruelty and sensuality, the latter by his effeminacy and gluttony. He reclined, in women's dress, on couches stuffed with hare's down or partridge feathers; he imported the choicest wines from Sicily and Greece; he would not condescend to eat sea fish except at a great distance from the sea, and would then distribute among the country-folk large quantities of the rarest kinds bought at an immense outlay. He lavishly rewarded the inventor of a new sauce; but if, on tasting it, he disliked its flavour, he compelled the inventor to eat of nothing else until he had discovered another more satisfactory to the Imperial palate. The senators, afraid of displeasing him, provided daily dinners at a great cost, which he contemptuously made over to his

guards. "Corrupted," says Gibbon, "by his youth, his country, and his fortune, he abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury, and soon found disgust and satiety in the midst of his enjoyments. The inflammatory powers of art were summoned to his aid; the confused multitude of women, of wines, and of dishes, and the studied variety of attitudes and sauces, served to revive his languid appetites." To divert him from reflections which could never be other than painful, he sometimes invited to his feasts a company of bald men, one-legged men, rheumatic men, and once of corpulent men, whose excessive perspiring, as they lay crowded together on their couches, afforded him a novel sensation of amusement. A favourite practical joke was to fill one of these couches with air instead of wool, and while the guests were eating and drinking a concealed tap was turned on, the couch sank, and those recumbent on it were thrown off right under the jet of water.

One turns with pleasure from this Imperial monster to the wise, noble-minded, and pure-living prince who succeeded him, Alexander Severus. A charming description of the manner in which he spent his day is given by the historians. He rose early, devoted the first hour to religious exercises, and then received his councillors, with whom he discussed public affairs and signed the necessary decrees. After an interval consecrated to the study of his favourite authors, Plato and Cicero, Virgil and Homer, he practised for awhile the gymnastic arts; bathed, lunched, and resumed with fresh energy the cares of state, reading and answering, with the assistance of his secretaries, the almost innumerable letters, petitions, memorials, and official despatches which poured in upon the world's master. He was then free to dine. His table was always served with wholesome simplicity, and the guests who shared it with him were men of learning and virtue, whom it was his pleasure to count among his friends. Of these the most distinguished were Dio Cassius the historian, and Ulpian the jurist.

Maximin could drink in a day an amphora, or about seven gallons of wine, and eat thirty or forty pounds of meat, but he knew nothing of the Art of Dining, or of the constituent elements of a really good dinner.

Galbus was an ardent votary of Adephagia—already spoken of as the goddess

of good eating; Valerian was as modest in his tastes as Marcus Aurelius himself. Gallienus was a man of many accomplishments, who shone brilliantly in every part he played except that of Emperor. He was a pretty poet and a fluent speaker, a skilful gardener, and, what is more to my present purpose, an admirable cook. He invented some exceedingly tasty stews; and we may feel assured that the dinners he gave to his friend, the philosopher Plotinus, were of a truly *recherché* description. It is not too bold a speculation that it was over a dish of his own invention he was lingering in his tent before Milan, when some conspirators gave a false alarm of an attack by the enemy. Springing from his couch, and tarrying not to put on his armour, he rode towards the point that was said to be threatened, was surrounded by the conspirators, and slain.

From his villa at Bææ, where he had entertained his friends with dinners of the first quality, Tacitus, the wealthy Roman senator, was called at the age of seventy-five to assume the Imperial purple. His banquets in the palace on the Palatine were haunted by shades of coming events, and in six months and twenty days he joined his predecessors "across the Styx."

When the ambassadors of Bahram, King of Persia, entered the camp of the Emperor Carus on an errand of peace, they were conducted to a soldier who was seated on the greensward, eating heartily of stale bacon and hard-boiled pease—the plainest and cheapest dinner, perhaps, ever eaten by an Emperor. For this soldier was Carus, the master of the Roman legions. He was as plain in his speech as in his diet; and in the course of a heated discussion, removing the cap which he wore to conceal his baldness, he swore by all the gods that unless King Bahram acknowledged the supremacy of Rome, he would strip Persia as bare of trees as his head was destitute of hair! From this interesting little story, which is told by Synesius, we can infer the simplicity of Carus's habits, and the reader will be prepared to learn that he gave no memorable dinners.

You remember that fine passage in Matthew Arnold:

In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay. . . .  
He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crowned his hair with flowers.

It applies to most of the Roman princes and nobles, who endeavoured in this way to cheat the weariness of life,—among

others to Carinus, son of Carus, who, like so many sons, was the living antithesis of his father. All his inclinations were luxurious. He drank of the costliest wines; he made feasts of the most sumptuous character, and invited to them singers, dancers, and buffoons; and so, with haggard eyes, looked on at the passing time, and shrank from the inevitable end.

When, weary of twenty years of empire, Diocletian abdicated the Roman throne and resigned the mastership of the world, he retired to Salona, in Dalmatia, and employed his leisure in planting and gardening, and gave little dinners to some chosen friends, which included, no doubt, fruits, salads, and vegetables of his own growing, and trout fresh caught from the Hyader that flowed hard by. Everybody knows his reply to the envoys sent by Maximian to press upon him the resumption of the reins of government: "If the Emperor could see the cabbages which I cultivate here with my own hands, he would no longer urge me to abandon the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power." The story is neatly told by Cowley:

Methinks I see great Diocletian walk  
In the Salonian garden's noble shade,  
Which by his own imperial hands was made.  
I see him smile, methinks, as he does talk  
With the ambassadors, who come in vain  
To entice him to a throne again.  
If I, my friends (said he), should to you show  
All the delights which in these gardens grow,  
'Tis likelier much that you should with me stay  
Than 'tis that you should carry me away:  
And trust me not, my friends, if every day  
I walk not here with more delight  
Than ever, after the most happy sight,  
In triumph to the Capitol I rode,  
To thank the gods, and to be thought myself almost  
a god.

I shall not dwell upon the luxurious feasts of Maxentius, who, as one of the most degraded of voluptuaries, is excluded by Julian from the Banquet of the Cæsars. He was not an artist at the table, but a glutton. An effective contrast was presented by his illustrious successor, Constantine the Great, who, from earliest youth to an advanced old age, preserved the vigour of his constitution by his rigid temperance. In his latest years he fell away, it is true, into effeminate habits, and in his new Byzantine palace set an ill example by the splendour of his entertainments; but he never degenerated into the vices of a Maxentius.

One of the most remarkable characters of antiquity was the Emperor Julian—the last of the great Pagans—the most philo-

sophical of princes, a statesman, a general, an orator, and a man of letters. No one of the rulers of Rome, except Julius Cæsar, seems to me to offer so interesting a study both in his life and his character. But here I must consider him only in relation to his dinner, on which he set a very low value. He was a strict vegetarian, though his range of vegetable food was more extensive than that of Nebuchadnezzar, and, being a staunch believer in vegetarianism, hurled bitter reproaches, in his "Misopogon," at the people of Antioch for their love of the flesh-pots. Libanius, who often shared his simple repasts, remarks that his light and sparing diet left his mind and body always free for the discharge of the duties he incessantly imposed upon them. While his ministers rested the indefatigable Emperor flew from one labour to another, and after a hasty lunch, retired into his library, until the public business which he had appointed for the evening called him from his beloved books. His "cœna" was even lighter than the earlier meal, and the pains of dyspepsia never harassed his sound and healthy slumbers.

The historian of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" describes in his stateliest periods the luxurious pomp of the Imperial Court at Constantinople under Julian's immediate predecessors. A thousand cooks, a thousand barbers, a thousand cup-bearers were among the multitudinous household. The gorgeous palaces erected by Constantine and his sons were decorated with the most beautiful marbles, and enriched with ornaments of massive gold. "The most exquisite dainties were procured to gratify their pride rather than their taste; birds of the most distant climates, fish from the most remote seas, fruits out of their natural season, winter roses, and summer snows." All this luxury was swept away by the austere Julian, who cared neither for cooks nor cup-bearers, and instead of "enjoying" his dinner, regretted that to the calls of nature he was compelled to surrender any, however few, of the precious minutes. Writing to his friend Hermogenes, he expresses his pleasure at having delivered himself from the voracious jaws of the many-headed hydra — *πολυκέφαλον ὕδραν*. But there was no necessity for his plunging into the other extreme. An Emperor may live decently without imitating an anchorite; and an Imperial kitchen should never show an empty grate. Julian's austerity be-

came repulsive when he offered his friends nothing better than a dish of herbs or a forked radish; just as it offended against the laws of social morality when it made him regardless of cleanliness. In the "Misopogon" he draws a picture of himself which to an impartial eye is necessarily displeasing. He seems absolutely to vaunt the length of his nails and the dirtiness of his hands; boasts that though the greater part of his body is covered with hair, the use of the razor is confined to his head; and luxuriates in the contemplation of his beard, which, in imitation of the Greek philosophers, he wore long, thick, and shaggy, but, unlike them, let us hope, never cleansed of its insect populace. Such is the portrait drawn by his own hand. Probably, if drawn by another, he would have resented it as exaggerated; and it is right to remember that his satire of "The Beard-Hater" was written as a retaliation on the citizens of Antioch for libelling the Emperor in their street songs, and is therefore, in part, an elaborate irony.

The Emperor Jovian reversed the economical system of Julian. Once more the Imperial kitchens were crowded with cooks, and the Imperial spits again set in motion. On his march to Constantinople he halted at Dadastana. The dinner-table was spread with the usual luxury, and Jovian dined with even more than his usual appetite. Next morning he was found dead in his bed, killed, it is thought, by a fit of indigestion, occasioned either by the quantity of the wine or the quality of the mushrooms he had inordinately swallowed.

In the reign of Valentinian the great dinner-giver was Damasus, Bishop or Pope of Rome, the profuseness and splendour of whose entertainments outvied even the sumptuousness of the Imperial table. Thus early had the Roman pontiffs assumed the luxurious state of temporal princes. You may read in Ammianus the severe censure of a Pagan on this excess. On the other hand Priscillian, Bishop of Avila, enjoined upon his followers a total abstinence from animal food; so that a Priscillianist dinner might have made a Damasian dessert. The illustrious Ambrose, the great Bishop of Milan, was scarcely less austere.

The second Valentinian profited by the example and teaching of Ambrose, and at the splendid dinners which he thought it his duty as an Emperor to give to his friends and courtiers, he practised the self-denial and temperance which he considered

to be incumbent on him as a Christian. This promising youth was strangled by order of his too-powerful general, Arbogastes.

Here let us consider for a moment the luxury of the Roman nobles in these last days of the Empire, as it is depicted by Ammianus Marcellinus. We shall not dwell upon the gorgeous decorations of their houses, their robes of silk and purple, their trains of servants, their painted and gilded galleys, the processions which attended them on their journeys, but turn to what he says of their dinners as adequate proof of their folly. Whenever they celebrate, he says, with profuse and pernicious excess, their private banquets, the choice of the guests is the subject of anxious deliberation. They seldom prefer the modest, the sober, and the learned, and the nomenclators, who are usually governed by motives of interest, dexterously insert in the invitations the names of the most worthless of mankind. But their most familiar and frequent companions are those parasites, who practise the usefulest of all arts, the art of flattery; who vehemently applaud every word and action of their noble patron, gaze with rapture on his marble columns and mosaic pavements, and eagerly praise the pomp and circumstance which he is led to identify with his own merits. At their tables the birds, the dormice, or the fish, which appear of extraordinary size, are surveyed with rapt attention. Their real weight is accurately ascertained by a pair of scales, and while the more rational guests grow weary of the vain and tiresome repetition, notaries are summoned to attest an authentic record of each marvellous event.

Such was the luxurious indolence of the Roman nobles when, in 410, Alaric and his Goths captured, pillaged, and set fire to the Imperial city.

Theodosius the Younger discountenanced these vices. He was temperate almost to intemperance in his eating and drinking; his fasts were frequent and severe, and he once refused to partake of any food until the monk who had imposed the penance upon him was induced to recall it.

A remarkable dinner was that which Attila, the great leader of the Huns, gave to the ambassadors from this devout ruler—Maximin, Vigilantius, and the historian Priscus. They were stopped on the threshold till they had made a devout libation to the health and prosperity of the conqueror, and were then conducted to their

respective seats in a spacious hall. The Royal table and couch, spread with carpets and fine linen, was raised in the middle of the hall by several steps. On either hand were ranged two rows of small tables, each accommodating three or four guests; at one of these, on the monarch's left, sat the strangers. Attila, receiving from his cup-bearer a goblet filled with wine, courteously drank to the health of the most distinguished guest, who immediately rose, and in the same manner acknowledged the Royal compliment. This ceremony was performed with each illustrious person present, and very tedious it must have been, since it was thrice repeated—as each course or service was placed on the tables. After the meat had been removed the Huns applied themselves to the wine-cup, and indulged their love of strong liquors long after the ambassadors had retired, who, however, did not withdraw until they had had an opportunity of observing the character of their convivial amusements. First, two Scythian bards, standing before their sovereign's couch, recited some verses which they had composed in honour of his valour and his victories. Next, a Moorish and a Scythian buffoon successively excited the noisy mirth of the revellers by their deformed figure, grotesque attire, antic gestures, and ludicrous speeches, which they compounded of Latin, Hunnish, and Gothic. The hall resounded with peals of laughter, but Attila maintained throughout a calm and impassive countenance, permitting himself no relaxation of his dignity.

The third Valentinian, whose crimes and tragic fate were put on the stage by Beaumont and Fletcher in one of their finest dramas, maintained a sumptuous table. Avitus, his successor, unwisely abandoned for the Imperial diadem the pure pleasures of rural life which he enjoyed in the safe seclusion of his estates near Clermont, spending the morning hours in the tennis-court or the library, the afternoon on horseback or in social recreation. His table was twice served, at dinner and supper, with hot meat, boiled and roast, and wine. The possession of Imperial power developed the latent and unsuspected vices of his nature. He indulged in luxurious banquets, at which he insulted by his ribald jests the nobles whose wives had been unfortunate enough to attract his attention.

Very different was the behaviour of his contemporary, Theodoric the Second, King

of the Visigoths. On common days, says Sidonius, his dinner exactly resembled that of a private citizen; but every Saturday many honourable guests were invited to his table, which, on such occasions, displayed the refinement of Greece, the plenty of Gaul, the swift order of Italy; public magnificence, private assiduity, and Royal order. The gold or silver plate was less distinguished by its weight and cost, than by its brightness and quaintness of workmanship; the taste was gratified without the intervention of foreign luxury. The size and number of the wine-cups were regulated by the laws and principles of temperance, and serious and instructive conversation sped them on their round. After dinner, the King usually refreshed himself with a few minutes' slumber. When he awoke he called for his chess-board, and challenged one of his friends to join him in the game, which he was passionately fond of as the image of war.

According to Procopius, the Emperor Majorian, desiring to ascertain the military strength of the Vandals, dyed his hair, and in the character of his own ambassador repaired to Carthage. He was hospitably entertained by King Genseric, whose annoyance may be imagined when he afterwards discovered who had been his guest. The incident is romantic, but most writers reject it as apocryphal. It was not impossible, but perhaps we may pronounce it improbable.

Count Ricimer, the most powerful among the captains of the bands of mercenaries to whom, at this time, the defence of Italy was entrusted, received in marriage the daughter of Anthemius, Emperor of the West. The wedding dinner was a miracle of luxury; and all Rome gave itself up to rejoicings on "the auspicious occasion." The streets, the theatres, the places of public and private resort were gay with hymeneal songs and dances. But discord soon arose between the Emperor and his powerful son-in-law, who could brook no authority over him; and when he found Anthemius resolved to be his own master, prepared to depose him, and to place on the vacant throne a more subservient prince. Anthemius was slain by the soldiers; Ricimer lived, however, only forty days to enjoy his victory.

The last of the Emperors of the West was the feeble Augustulus, who gladly laid down his Imperial crown at the bidding of Odoacer, the barbarian King of Italy, in

exchange for an annuity of six thousand pieces of gold. He retired to the celebrated villa of Lucullus, in Campania, where he gave such noble dinners that all the neighbouring patricians esteemed it no ordinary privilege to be his guests, and thanked their stars for the good fortune that had given them an ex-Emperor, with a knowledge of the culinary art, for their neighbour.

#### ALONE.

I THINK that I am never quite alone  
Since that strange night, the mystic night that hung  
Tranced 'mid her stars to listen, when, mine own,  
Those few short words arose from heart to tongue,  
And as you whispered them life changed to be  
Something rapt, glorified, sublime, to me.  
The soft gloom hung about us like a veil,  
Only the glimmer in the western skies  
Crept in, to show your lips were passion-pale,  
To read the rapture in your half-closed eyes;  
And then those words were spoken, and the rest  
Was hushed in happy silence on your breast.  
Morning and daylight swept away the dream,  
Life clasped her fetters and resumed her sway,  
Only a soft sweet knowledge, like a gleam,  
Lingered around each hour of all the day;  
And even the bitter ring of the farewell,  
With gentler note upon the spirit fell.

And since, my darling, though broad leagues of space  
Are spread between us, though dim, dull, and mute  
Is life without the sunshine of thy face,  
Is life without the echo of your foot,  
So all encompassed by your love am I  
That my blank ways are trod contentedly.  
Since in all evil things I feel how you  
Would soothe them—in all happy things I think  
How you would prize them—set to measure true,  
There is no discord in our perfect link;  
With thought, faith, hope, with life and love your own,  
How can your chosen ever feel "alone"?

#### ON GOING SLOW.

THE most obvious of the advantages of slow-going generally in life is its safety. There is next to no hazard in it. You see what is before you considerably ere you reach it, and can make your plans or trim your wits accordingly. You have none of those abrupt calls upon your intellect and energies for sudden serious action in unforeseen emergencies which by no means suit all of us. You may, in fact, drowse through life on these conditions, waking in earnest now and then to take in a new cargo of activities, smoking the pipe of contentment all your days.

That is, of course, on the assumption that, like the majority of Europeans, you do not care for strains for their own sake,

or even for them regarded speculatively. Our Western cousins find no satisfaction—if they are to be believed—in our tardy Eastern ways. They must tear through life, getting a new sensation every hour or so. They don't seem to care that the human entity is a thing limited in itself and its capacities; what it gains in one way it loses in other ways. If you were to spend all the years of your life in travelling hotly from city to city and country to country you would inevitably become very knowing in certain ways; but it would in all probability be a gain in superficiality at the expense of a loss in depth. You would probably become able to compile a truly remarkable and almost exhaustive list of the good things to eat and drink which the world contains; but how about the felicities of domestic life—what would you know about these?

It seems likely to come out much the same if you look at the matter upon its other facets.

If by galloping through life we could extend our days, who would not so gallop? But, in fact, by galloping we are drawing bills upon ourselves payable so many years after date—and they have to be met. The more friction, the more loss by attrition. The average country parson, whom all the insurance companies are wooing for a client, trots through existence in the most humdrum way conceivable. Now and then he has a tiff with his bishop or a churchwarden, now and then he loses a child, perhaps twice in twoscore years he publishes a volume of sermons which do not turn out as well as he expected. He goes not out of his way to invite trouble to visit him. It seems to him wiser policy to stay in his own familiar groove, fencing that on both sides against the enemies to a man's peace. And he lives to be two or three and eighty, if not a cool fourscore and ten. The odds are about three to one that upon the whole he may be pronounced a happy man. This, too, in spite of living at about the rate at which a glacier glides.

The typical American is our country parson's antithesis. At twenty he has an itch to conquer the world, see all things, try all things, be all things, including millionaire and President; and at thirty, in the course of his mad efforts to fulfil the fanciful dreams of twenty, he has used up the vitality of a score of years instead of but ten. The rate of self-consumption does not lessen with him, and so just after

middle-age he suddenly goes out like a volcano which has used up all its fuel. His death may make a bit of a hum, but what is he the better for that?

We are told by experts that the quicker a train goes up to a certain point the more security it has. Quite so. That is, if you can be sure the line is clear; but it happens now and again that the line is not clear. If, under these circumstances, you would just as soon be in an express at sixty miles an hour as in a goods train at ten to fifteen miles an hour, you must be complimented on your audacity or your neck.

To keep for a moment to this contrast of the trains: which is the better for seeing purposes, an express or an ordinary? Surely for common eyes the weariness of trying to enjoy scenery viewed in a flash is an unendurable experience. The eyes themselves soon revolt against the task set them. On the other hand, in an ordinary train, at an ordinary rate of progress, the attention is naturally turned to the window. Houses, gardens, parks, and meadows have time to show themselves in their proper relation and in something of their real interest. We are engrossed, and the time passes pleasantly.

It is possible to endure even a very slow train under these conditions. The other day I travelled a distance of about forty-five miles, and, with stoppages on the way, the journey took rather more than four hours. It was not in England, but in Denmark, where, in the country at least, they live slowly, very slowly. Yet how does this journey stand in my mind? Well, chiefly in its scenic accompaniment, as a strongly-defined landscape of heather moorland, with blinking patches of snow among the brown tufts, and here and there a frozen pool of melted snow in the hollows. I shall never forget it. Not much to remember, you may say. Perhaps; but then it is something to carry away a true impression of any country, and this had time to write itself most truthfully in my mind; and, moreover, at each stoppage we had a fresh relay of apple-cheeked Jutland men and women, choke-full of conversation and hearty exuberance of spirits. You would never have supposed, to hear them, that they lived in one of the most backward and old-fashioned parts of Europe. The men combined chat and laughter with tobacco, the latter puffed—it was not quite the mildest tobacco in the world—from huge pipes with china bowls, which rested like babies upon their knees.



As for the women, they gave their tongues no rest. One knows what they talked about. Their sisters in all countries have the same characteristic. Good humour ruled the roost in this lazy train. There was no noxious vibration of the cars, no latent alarm in any breast; every one knew what would happen, and every one seemed like a person about to sit down with excellent appetite to a dinner of the most assured quality.

Speaking for myself, my recollections of "rapides," when they were really rapid, is a dusty and uncomfortable memory. The wash or bath that was their corollary was generally the pleasantest feature of the experience.

To change the point of argument: which morality is likely to be the better—that of slow-going in life or that of express-going? Can you doubt which? The best human virtues are not mushroom growths; they are not even the harvest of a year or two. They seem to demand of a man that he shall himself have something like fixity of tenure. Then, and then only, will they consent to show their fair fruit.

The man who believes in slow-going generally believes in solid-going. What he seems to be you may, without injudicious risk, believe him to be. He takes no rash step, for he has the old fashioned notion that he is in honour and self-interest bound to secure his retreat in case of need. Alike in marrying a wife and a business transaction, you may rely upon it he is giving himself for all he is worth. There is no ace up his sleeve, no mean trick to spring upon those who have trusted him.

But can you say anything like as much of his opposite? In the very essence of the contrast lies this looseness of morals as one of the most obstinate of satellites for the fast man in life. He trusts to chance where the other pins his faith to slow, sure labour. What, he asks, does it matter if I lose this turn, or even the next turn also? "Red must come up some day, and then I shall be all right." He gambles with the future, and if he does it in one particular, you may depend upon it he does it in other particulars also. It is a distasteful thing to say, but the man who speculates in two or three walks of life, flashing up and down them all, cannot be deemed inconsistent even if he carries his vice with him into his home. He has married a wife, let us say. There is risk enough in that, heaven knows. "Just so," whispers our irresponsible galloper through

life; "but she is pretty, and very agreeable to me now, and that's about enough. Who knows what may happen by-and-by? She may continue to be pretty and agreeable, or she may die, and either event will find me resigned. There's plenty of spoil in the sea yet, my friend."

This is very nauseous, is it not? Yet it is not untrue to life.

Your meteor who coruscates now in one line of life and now in another, and seems to have no abiding place, may do well and settle down at sixty or so into the most exemplary of old fogeys. If so, well and good. The world will then have nothing but pleasant things to say about him. But until he has dropped his anchor and tendered the usual hostages to fortune the world will never give him the preference as a responsible custodian of its affairs over the slow man, whose word is his bond, and whose goings and comings are of the ordered kind.

If this may be said of men with such discordant attributes it may be said with added force of women with the like dissimilarities. I suppose by-and-by we shall hear little of the old saying that our womenkind are such as we men make them. They have stood now on their own legs long enough to realise that they can, if they will, play their part quite independently of us. They may thus also choose whether they will go fast or slow.

Some there are of them who have already chosen the former method of progress. It suits them but sadly from the masculine point of view; from any other standpoint a man can hardly presume to judge of them. To us it seems something of a felony against the scheme of creation that the ladies should make the running in any of the walks of life that have hitherto been considered to be barred to them. Still, that is purely a personal feeling. If they, dear earnest creatures, think they can attain happiness by these or any other roads, in the name of happiness let them try. To people of certain temperaments there is happiness to be found even in the realisation that the world is full of vanity, and that all, slow-coaches and madcaps alike, are graspers at the stars.

Of one thing let the methodical ones who stay at home and settle to the work nearest their hands feel confident: they have just as much chance of true contentment as their brothers who go abroad with an exclamation of impatience upon their

lips. A single village is a microcosm of life as shown in human nature. If you know that to the core, the man who has travelled in every continent cannot astonish you, except with his tales about life's scenic appointments. You would then, ten to one, know more of the drama of life than he—and that is better than the fittings, be these ever so romantic. The man who eats his dinner methodically and spends an hour over it, may seem a lazy dog to the will-o'-the-wisp who rushes his in twenty minutes. But the former savours each mouthful ere he lets it go. As for the other he is thinking of other things, and he gets indigestion for his pains. It is much the same in the world at large. Your fast-goer is a chronic dyspeptic—he sees and tries too much.

## A DRIVE IN ITALY.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE descent from a train at a minor station in Italy differs widely from the like business in England. The train from Rome was filled with travellers bound for Florence or Milan, or even London, and there was a look of incredulous surprise, not unmingled with pity, upon the faces of our fellow-travellers when we gathered together our belongings and prepared to leave the carriage at Spello, for our journeying by rail had again come to an end, and we were about to take to the road to see what was to be seen in the byways of Umbria and Tuscany where the railway, as yet, goeth not. Modest as our luggage was, when thrust forth on the platform, there seemed to be no means of transporting it to the town, which was nearly a mile distant, so we decided ultimately to leave it in deposit and set forth alone to see, first, whether a resting-place, such as we might care to abide in, might be found amongst the houses, more or less ramshackle, which were piled up against the hill-side and formed the city of Spello.

Though the roadway leading up to the town was less severe than the approach to Palestrina, we had a hot sun beating down upon us, and the heat cast up from the stone pavement made the shade of the lofty houses in the almost deserted streets very grateful. A short consultation with the intelligent boy cicerone, who seems indigenous to these little sleepy towns, convinced us that we need not seek for shelter at Spello that night. It was yet

forenoon and there were only two churches to be visited.

The pictorial glory of Spello lies in its frescoes by Pinturicchio, a glory which will soon fade with the fading of the frescoes themselves. The cathedral, which contains the chief of them, is a damp, frouzy, ill-savoured church. The rich, harmonious colouring of the master, which is still as bright as ever in the series of wall pictures descriptive of the career of Pius the Second in the cathedral library at Siena, is here blurred and faded. The grace and charm of the drawing still remains, but time and neglect will soon begin to ruin the outlines, as they have already ruined the colours. It is hard to say which is the more wonderful: the wealth of noble works of art in these obscure, half ruined little towns, or the local apathy which is dooming them to destruction. Luckily for posterity, the managers of the Arundel Society have had these frescoes copied in water-colours, and have reproduced them in the admirable series of lithographs of old Italian masters.

The road lies along a level plain at the foot of the mountains from Spello to Assisi, where we had fixed to stop the night. There is considerably more life in the latter place than in Spello; but this is only natural, seeing that a hundred visitors repair every year to the shrine of Saint Francis, or to see the finest works of Giotto, to one who may stop at Spello. How greatly the fashion of looking at pictures, and the zeal of religious pilgrims, has been stimulated by facilities of travel may be well illustrated by comparing the mental attitude of the contemporary visitor to Assisi with that of Goethe at the end of last century. He turned out of his way, when journeying from Perugia to Rome, to visit the Temple of Minerva—a fine building of the Augustan age, which is now converted into a church. Over this he lavishes several pages of sentimental verbiage, but he passed by with contempt the barbaric churches built one on the top of the other where the saint's body lay. He waxes enthusiastic over the style and proportions of the temple, but he has no word for the pictured stories with which Cimabue and Giotto have enriched the wonderful churches which every one now goes to see. Scott had not yet arisen to invest the monk and the crusader with the charm of romance, and cultivated minds had not lost their horror of the barbarism of the Middle Ages.

He who would see Assisi aright must

see it in sunlight, and in strong sunlight too. The mighty mass of the church of St. Francesco is piled up against the side of the hill in the strangest fashion. The German architect, who was summoned in 1228 to erect the monumental church, had no experience of his own or written treatise to guide him in the construction of a church in such a situation. To build the central fane was fairly plain sailing; but when he was required to extend his work towards the valley, there was nothing to be done but to rear first a huge substruction of masonry up to the level of the existing foundations, upon which the new shrines and chapels should rest. As one climbs the steep ascent to the town, this vast artificial projection, with its symmetrical range of shallow arches, forms a most striking and picturesque object, and illustrates characteristically the unconquerable resolution of the founders in their commemorative work. Next it was found necessary to add yet another complete church; and to avoid the enormous labour which must have been expended in forming further artificial foundations, or in excavating the side of the mountain, the only other alternative, the architect, whose name, by the way, was Jacopo di Alemannia, boldly built his new church on the top of the first one.

In 1818, during some excavations, the remains of Saint Francis were discovered in a rude stone coffin, and this find was made the occasion of a fresh spell of commemorative building. Under the floor of the original church a sepulchral chapel was constructed in the excavation round the tomb of the saint, so that now there is to be found at Assisi the unique spectacle of three churches piled one on the top of the other.

No sooner were the churches finished than the leading artists of Italy were called in to decorate them by recording on the walls and vaults the story of the life and miracles of Saint Francis. The visitor will probably enter the upper church first, as there the light is always good. The proportions of the fabric are pure and noble. Like Milan Cathedral it bears strong traces of the northern spirit of its designer; and, like that luxuriant mass of sculptured marble, seems to have wandered by mistake south of the Alps, and drifted into somewhat unsympathetic surroundings amongst the Lombardic and Renaissance structures which almost everywhere do duty for churches. On the roof are the earliest frescoes of the church, and the

finest extant work of Cimabue. Seen from below the crudities and imperfections of his drawing are scarcely apparent, and the immunity from damp and deposit of dust which these frescoes, from their position, have always enjoyed, has preserved their colour almost in their original splendour. On the wall below is a series of paintings representing scenes in the life of Saint Francis, hitherto set down as Giotto's, but now, in these days of destructive criticism and renaming, proclaimed to be the work of either pupils or followers. Perhaps this latter-day criticism is not far from the truth, for there is in the series too great a variety of style to allow us to accept them, without strong evidence, as the work of one hand. But whatever hand may have produced them, they are most interesting and valuable material for consideration in studying the growth of Italian art.

The paintings of the lower church, which can only be well seen in the morning and afternoon light on bright days, are unquestionably the glory of Assisi. Any one with an eye only moderately trained may see in them evidences that Giotto's spirit was keenly appreciative both of the loftiest and of the simplest forms of beauty, and that his failure to reveal perfectly his perceptions arose simply from the fact that the technique of pictorial representation was so rudimentary in those days as to be practically non-existent. Men were yet tied and bound by the quaint Egyptian rules of Byzantine art; and though Cimabue, Giotto's master, struggled manfully against its numbing influence, he was yet its slave. The meaning Giotto was yearning to express is as manifest in their cramped, ungainly forms as is the meaning of Michael Angelo in the unfinished statues he has left, mere rough-hewn blocks with the master's idea struggling, as it were, to free itself from the marble shroud. In a side chapel there is one small picture in which Giotto has given a rendering of the oft-repeated theme of the Virgin and Child full of character and dramatic force. The mother's face is stern, and her forefinger is uplifted in sign of rebuke. The child has a look of querulous sorrow on his face, as if protesting against the scolding he is getting. He has evidently been a naughty boy, and his offence seems to have been his refusal to bless Saint Francis, who is standing by. I know of no other Italian picture of the age which catches so much of the modern

spirit. It emphatically tells its own story, and on this account, perhaps, has been ignored by the critical gentlemen who profess to discover significations beyond the power of any but the ultra-illuminated in the Madonnas of Botticelli and Leonardo's "La Gioconda."

As one passes through chapel after chapel all filled with the work of Giotto, one cannot help feeling astonished at the marvellous industry of these old men. And it is all work of the same high level. A description of the subjects would be merely a catalogue, so I must reluctantly pass on to the next stage of our journey. At the foot of the hill below Assisi stands the church of Santa Maria Segli Angeli, a huge fabric built over the little chapel in which Saint Francis founded his order. A further drive of about three miles brings us to Perugia, the bustling, prosperous capital of Umbria. Perugia is built upon the slope of the Apennines, considerably above the Tiber, and sixteen hundred feet above the sea. It is one of the healthiest towns of Italy, and it contains one of the best hotels, kept by Madame Brufani, an Englishwoman, who practically entertains all of her compatriots who elect to stop in this delightful city.

Nowhere else in Italy are the Etruscan walls and gates in so perfect a state. They stand almost unbroken, and serve their purpose as they did in the days when Rome was not. There is a fountain by Niccolo Pisano, a bronze statue of Julius the Third, and dozens of palaces with lofty fronts richly carved in stone. To write of art in Perugia would be too long a task. One might fill pages with the glories of those wonderful frescoes which Perugino painted for the hall of the money-changers—is there not just now a flying rumour that our own Royal Exchange is to be decorated by our leading painters?—of the wonderful collection in the Pinacoteca, where one may see the work of Bonfigli, Alunno, and other masters scarcely known out of Perugia. In addition to these sights there are one or two minor ones which are often missed by the too hasty traveller. One is the oratorio of San Bernadino, the work of Agostino Ducci, and perhaps the finest example of terra cotta in the world; and another is the church of San Pietro, which, in addition to some interesting works by lesser known painters, contains some magnificent wood-carving in the stalls of the choir. There are dozens of panels, all different and all carved in the

purest, freest style after the most graceful designs. The copying of these panels and friezes has had a most salutary effect on the revival of wood-carving in Italy.

We drove early in the morning through the Porta Augusta, the grandest of the Etruscan gates, on our way to Gubbio. The road for some miles lay along the valley of the Tiber. The river meanders along, here a calm reach like an English Midland stream, and then a torrent like a Highland burn as to its impetuosity, but how unlike a Highland burn as to its fish! The banks are everywhere broken and varied; with the graceful bridges, the lofty towers, and the clumps of stone pines, one is reminded at every turn of some early landscape of Wilson or Turner. Soon we bore eastward, and then an outlying ridge of the Apennines had to be crossed. At a certain point our driver descended from the box; and, standing on the wall by the roadside, waved his arms and yelled aloud. A figure, a few fields off, moved in semaphore wise by way of response, and yelled back some reply. Thereupon we slowly resumed our upward way, and soon the reason of the above-mentioned parley was made clear. A boy appeared leading a pair of snow-white oxen; huge beasts, with skins like satin, mild, dark eyes, and wide-spreading horns. We had yet, the driver assured us, some seven miles of ascent, and the aforesaid oxen were to be yoked on in front to help us up to the summit of the road. They settled to their work with a will, and I had a notion that they dragged, not only the dead weight of the carriage, but the motive power, the pair of horses, as well. If they did, I dare say it was light work compared with their daily task. In any case they did their work splendidly, and we were sorry to lose their company. The view on all sides was so lovely, that the deliberate pace of the ascent was in no way a detriment. As soon as we were on the descent, and our friends the oxen plodding back to their place at the plough, our driver began to lash and shriek at his horses, so we tore downhill at a break-neck pace. The country around was just as lovely as on the other side, but we rushed through it too fast really to enjoy it.

At last a cry from the driver, "There is Gubbio, signor," told us that our journey was coming to an end. We looked at the blank, sun-baked side of the mountain in front, but for some time could see no town,

or anything resembling one. At last the black rectangular shadows, cast by the walls and towers, conveyed to us the impression that Gubbio really was there. The tint of the masonry is exactly the same as that of the hills behind, and there is scarcely a tree in the place, so it was no wonder we failed to distinguish it. Gubbio has none of the traces of extreme antiquity one finds in Perugia and Cortona. It dates indeed from the times of Umbrian independence, but the present town is entirely mediæval. The pottery of Gubbio ranks amongst the rarest of majolica, and it was the hope of picking up a stray piece or two of this, and of seeing something of the work of the local school of painters, which attracted us to the place. With regard to the first our hopes were soon destroyed. Our landlady, in reply to our enquiries, assured us that the last scrap of old work had been carried away years ago, and she went on to express her wonder that no trader had found it worth his while to set up a shop for the sale of sham antique pottery to satisfy the cravings of insistent but not over-experienced travellers like ourselves. Remembering how unfailing is the supply of bullets and badges at Waterloo, and of small blue gods in Egypt, it certainly did seem as if the people of Gubbio were either very honest or very unenterprising.

There are still at work a few potters who produce an imitation of the old ware. We went to their workshops, but we knocked in vain. They were either asleep, or feasting, or on a journey. Anyhow, they were not to be seen by chance customers like ourselves, so we were unable to take away even a bit of the modern ware of Gubbio.

We fared no better with regard to our hunt for the old masters of the Gubbian school. Art lovers seemed to be as rare as china buyers in Gubbio. A long climb through the steep lanes under a blazing sun brought us to the door of the cathedral, where the best pictures—those of the Nelli and Nucci—are; but, alas! it was fast shut. Application at the house of the sacristan revealed to us that he had gone to see the bishop, and had taken the key with him, so there was nothing to be done but to post off in search of him.

Arrived at the bishop's house, we found that nothing was known as to the whereabouts of the owner thereof, nor of the sacristan, nor his bunch of keys. Perhaps, the housekeeper suggested, if we were to make the ascent to the cathedral

again we might find it open by this time; but we were too weary to attempt this. In the town hall there were several interesting rooms; indeed, the great sight of Gubbio is housed within these walls. There are the celebrated Eugubian tablets, seven thin plates of bronze discovered in 1444 in the ruins of the ancient theatre. From the fact that they are partially written in the Umbrian dialect, partially in Latin, and partially in Etruscan, many attempts have been made to find, through their aid, the key to the mystery of the last-named language; but the same subject is not treated of in the three tongues, as in the case of the Rosetta Stone, so no progress has been made.

We wound up our stay at Gubbio with an excellent dinner at the comfortable inn, and afterwards continued our journey to Citta di Castello. We had a delightful day, and our disappointments, if they rankled a little at the time, after all gave us an excuse for visiting Gubbio again at some future season.

From Gubbio the road descends to the valley of the Tiber which is reached at Fratta, and runs along it to Citta di Castello. This town stands away from the mountains on a level plain girt by its mediæval walls and towers. The moon was shining brightly when we arrived, and the tall white walls of the houses and the black shadows cast everywhere gave a ghostly air to the place, which was not dispelled when we entered our quarters for the night. The hotel, like so many others in Italy, had once seen better days as a palace. The Vitelli, the great family that dominated the place in the fifteenth century, must have been somewhat overhoused, for, in addition to the one to which we repaired, they had four or five others in the town. To enter our inn we had to climb a steep stone staircase from the street up to an enormous stone-flagged hall, where we were received by a most courteous chambermaid; but even the charm of her manner, set forth as it was by the light of a very dim candle, could not dispel the somewhat uncanny impression which had first taken us. She led the way along a passage into another vast apartment, then down another long passage into another room, then at the end of a third passage we found our quarters for the night, and very comfortable ones they were.

Our first visit in the morning was to an annexe of the palace, now in a piteous

state of disrepair and used as a store for oak bark and firewood. The roof of the principal staircase is painted in lovely arabesques and medallions, and round the frieze of the great apartment above is a series of frescoes representing some military operations, out of which, no doubt, the Vitelli of the time issued as a victor. Nowhere in this land of fallen magnificence had the sense of ruin seemed so vivid as in this forlorn chamber. The work of the picture-seeker in Citta di Castello has been made easier of late by the collection of the best pictures from the scattered churches into the municipal gallery, formerly one of those monasteries with which the town was as much overdone as with palaces. Only one church, San Domenico, contains anything of interest, a fine fresco by Christoforo Gherardi, and an altar, now void and desolate, over which formerly hung the Crucifixion, by Raphael, which was sold last summer at Christie's in the Dudley sale.

The municipal gallery contains the first known work of Raphael, a processional banner representing the creation of Eve. It was formerly used as a curtain, and has suffered irreparable damage, being now little more than a bit of discoloured canvas. Many of the finest works, which adorned the palaces of the nobles in the prosperous days of the town, have followed the Raphael into foreign lands; but there are still some grand pictures by Luca Signorelli, Filippo Lippi, and Raphael del Colle, in the municipal gallery, and in the Mancini and Bufalini palaces.

A short drive through a fertile, well-cultivated plain brought us to Borgo san Sepolcro, a town much smaller, but at the same time more illustrious in the annals of art; for there was born Piero della Francesca, the teacher of the mighty Signorelli, and himself a painter of the rarest power and keenest insight. At home we have some fine work of his—the Nativity and the portrait of Isotta da Rimini in the National Gallery; but it is only in San Sepolcro and Arezzo that one can judge how great a man he was. In the communal chamber at the former place is his fresco of the Resurrection, certainly one of the most fascinating and awe-inspiring pictures in the world. Mr. J. A. Symonds has described it in words which for truth and eloquence cannot be matched, so I will venture to give them here:

"Those who have once seen his fresco

of the Resurrection in Borgo san Sepolcro will never forget the deep impression of solitude and aloofness from all earthly things produced by it. It is not so much the admirable grouping and masterly drawing of the four sleeping soldiers, or even the majestic type of the Christ emergent without effort from the grave, as the communication of a mood felt by the painter, and instilled into our souls, that makes this by far the grandest, most poetic, and most awe-inspiring picture of the Resurrection. The landscape is simple and severe, with the cold light upon it of the dawn before the sun is risen. The drapery of the ascending Christ is tinged with auroral colours, like the earliest clouds of morning, and his level eyes, with the mystery of the slumber of the grave still upon them, seem gazing far beyond our scope of vision into the region of the eternal and illimitable."

I should not like to take up my abode at Borgo san Sepolcro, even were I assured of a perpetual seat in the town council, with the opportunity of turning my eyes, whenever I might be weary of the details of municipal business, up to Piero's wonderful creation. Piero is very fond of putting rose wreaths on the heads of his angels and youths, and here also he has crowned the head of Christ with roses, in reference perhaps to the legend that the crown of thorns blossomed when it was pressed down upon His brow.

The inn at San Sepolcro was one of the most comfortable and unconventional we stopped at. A fat landlord and landlady, a fat cook and waiter, came out to meet us, and others of the staff peeped in now and then by turns to get a glance at us, for English do not come every day. Of course we were the only guests, and here, as at other places, we speculated in vain to determine where the demand could come from which kept such houses of entertainment going; all that one can want on the score of clean, comfortable beds, and excellent food and wine, and reasonable charges. Very soon the rumour that English folk were in the town spread abroad, and divers vendors of articles of antiquity grouped themselves about the passages and staircase. These the waiter treated with the loftiest contempt.

"There are some more people with cracked jugs and bits of painted wood, signor," he said as he entered. And when I exhibited to him a rather nice Montelupo dish I had bought, and besought his admiration for it, the only eulogy I could

extract from him was, "Yes, it would be a nice dish—if it were full of macaroni."

Half the townspeople were assembled in front of the hotel to see us start the next morning. The citizens, who had our francs in exchange for their bits of majolica, and all their friends and relations, and the gentleman who tried hard, but unsuccessfully, to sell us a genuine Raphael del Colle, waved a good-bye to us as to old friends. We drove over the mountains by a pass fifteen hundred feet high to Arezzo, through richly-wooded valleys. Arezzo is a town which contains enough objects of artistic and historical interest for an article by itself, so here I must conclude. It is also on the main line of railway, and we took leave of our carriage, having spent ten days in the byways, delightful enough to make us resolve that we would start driving again should we ever return to Italy. And who visits this fair land in the right spirit and does not wish to return? Were there ever truer words written than those of Browning's?—

And we slope to Italy at last  
And youth, by green degrees.

### AN IRISH JUDICIAL JOKER.

THE historic building called the "Four Courts" is at present pointed out with just pride by the Dublin jarvey as one of the sights of the Irish metropolis. But the outside of the building is now more attractive than the interior. The stranger is not pressed to enter; and if he does enter while the Court is sitting, he will find himself in a peaceful atmosphere, where a grave Judge presides, and painfully solemn barristers discuss, and orderly spectators listen with due decorum.

But it was not always thus. In the early part of the present century the Court of Common Pleas furnished the good citizens of Dublin with even better amusement than the Theatre Royal. As soon as the Court opened, the waiting crowd streamed in from the spacious hall; the air soon became hot and stifling; and frequent bursts of merriment floated out through the open door. Bluff Harry Grady was there, teasing and brow-beating the witnesses, and horrifying that dainty and fastidious advocate, Tom Gould, by his vulgarity, real or assumed. The applause of the spectators at Harry's hits was genuine and enthusiastic. Curran would saunter in, and add to the merri-

ment by his exquisite drollery, while Leonard McNally limped up the floor after him. The polished Bush and the eloquent Plunket might frequently be seen, besides a score or so of other barristers more or less famous, all eager to contribute a "bon mot" to the common stock.

And what about the Judge? No doubt he would preserve a proper gravity amid all this fun and laughter? Not a bit of it. The presiding Judge—Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, no less—was the merriest wag of them all. Short and purdy of person, and rubicund of visage, with little, grey, twinkling, laughing eyes, he sat on the bench revelling in the hilarity that was going on around him, and adding fresh food for mirth by his quips and cranks and oddities. "There he sat," says Phillips, "in all his glory, puffing and punning and panting, till his ruddy countenance glowed like a full moon. At last, grilled beyond all endurance, off went the gown, and round went the wig till its tails, reversed, dangled from his forehead."

No wonder that a reverend archdeacon excused himself from visiting the Court of Common Pleas, on the ground that his profession did not allow him to frequent theatres.

The story of the Lord Chief Justice who presided over this singular Court throws a curious and even lurid light on the state of Irish society about the time of the Union. John Toler was born at Beechwood, in the county of Tipperary, in 1745. He was the second son of a Tipperary squire. This worthy man, when he lay a-dying, called his two sons to his bedside, and addressing the younger, said:

"The estate must go to your elder brother—all I can afford to give you is fifty pounds and these"—drawing from beneath his pillow a pair of handsome silver-mounted pistols. "Now, Jack, be always ready to keep up the credit of the family and the honour of an Irish gentleman."

Tipperary is a fighting county. As the lamented Thomas Davis sings:

Let Britain boast her British hosts,  
About them all right little care we,  
Nor British seas, nor British coasts  
Can match the man of Tipperary!

Tall is his form, his heart is warm,  
His spirit light as any fairy;  
His wrath is fearful as the storm  
That sweeps the hills of Tipperary!

In Squire Toler's hands the family pistols had not been allowed to rust; and Jack never forgot his father's dying behest. In after life it used to be his favourite boast that he began the world "with fifty pounds and a pair of hair triggers."

Jack's choice of a profession was strictly limited. He had not enough money for the army; a Tipperary fire-eater, even in those lax times, was hardly a fit candidate for the Church; and medicine had few attractions for a man of his mettle. Law only was left. To Law, therefore, Jack applied himself with the usual diligence of an Irish student; and in due course he was called to the Bar.

He now began the world in real earnest. His qualifications were not such as are likely to ensure success at the present day. In spite of his Tipperary origin, he was neither tall nor handsome. Neither, for that matter, was Curran; but then, Curran possessed the luminous eye of genius, which Toler lacked. Moreover, Toler had neither law nor learning, cared nothing for dignity, and made no pretence to eloquence. On the other hand, he possessed some qualities that stood him in good stead in those riotous, drinking, duelling times. He had a face of brass, a will of iron, and a conscience of india-rubber; his temper was imperturbable, his knowledge of the world thorough; and his reckless courage was admired even in a land whose sons are among the bravest of the brave.

Thus equipped, Toler literally fought his way to distinction, pushing aside men of far greater ability and learning. Law was then largely subservient to politics. Toler soon entered the Irish Parliament, where he naturally attached himself to the Government party, from which he had most to gain. He was not a brilliant orator, but he did a good deal of "slashing" for his party, and poured torrents of alush upon his opponents. As a specimen of his virulence, take the following brief extract from an onslaught on Mr. George Ponsonby:

"Had I heard a man out of doors using such language as that by which the honourable gentleman has violated the decorum of Parliament, I would have seized the ruffian by the throat, and dragged him to the dust."

Ponsonby was a man of talent and respectability, who afterwards rose to the highest distinction in public life. On this occasion he had the rare magnanimity to

ignore the provocation to fight so rudely offered.

Barrington, however, was more hot-headed or thin-skinned. In reply to an attack of Toler, he said: "The honourable Member has a hand for every man, and a heart for nobody."

Toler instantly took fire, and the pair immediately made their exit to arrange a duel. But a ludicrous incident followed. The Speaker despatched the Serjeant-at-Arms after the would-be combatants. Toler was caught by the skirts of his coat in a door, and the messengers laid hold of him just as the skirts were torn completely off. Barrington was overtaken in the street, brought back on a man's shoulders, and thrown down on the floor of the House like a sack of coals. It was a ridiculous situation; Curran increased the ridicule by a few comical remarks; and the affair ended by the two legislators promising before the Speaker that they would be good boys in future. Such were the men who governed Ireland!

The Members of the Irish House of Commons were never slow to indulge in personalities. Even Grattan and Flood frequently broke out into bitter vituperation, and the rank and file were only humble imitators of these illustrious orators, but somewhat irascible men. Sir Boyle Roche, however, generally threw oil on the troubled waters by his harmless pleasantry and inimitable bulls. The present generation of Irish Members, who sometimes make things lively in St. Stephen's, are not altogether exempt from the failings of their predecessors; but, alas! there is now no Sir Boyle Roche among them. Colonel Saunderson, indeed, is a great joker entirely, but his jokes, unlike those of the worthy Baronet, carry a sting in their tail. Fortunately the days of the "duello" are over, and the result of a stormy debate is no longer a meeting in "The Five Acres" at six o'clock in the morning.

While practising at the Bar Toler became a master of repartee. He acquired facility by constant practice, as he never lost an opportunity of firing off a joke, good, bad, or indifferent. When Lord Redesdale, a dull Sassenach, was made Lord Chancellor of Ireland, he gave a dinner to the Irish Bar, whose members he had heard were extremely witty. Being totally guiltless of wit himself, he determined to be at least entertaining. Accordingly he related some of his best Bar stories, which, however, were not up to



the high standard of his audience. At length skating became a subject of conversation, and his lordship said that in his boyhood all danger was avoided, for before they began to skate they always put blown bladders under their arms, so if the ice happened to break they were buoyant and saved.

"Ay, my lord," said Toler, "that's what we call blather-am-skate in Ireland."

Sir Jonah Barrington, who tells the story, naively observes that Lord Redesdale could not understand this sort of thing at all. According to Sir Jonah, the Earl was a well-meaning sort of person, but his intellect was not sufficiently fine to appreciate the subtleties of Irish humour. The rollicking Hibernian barristers naturally looked with contemptuous pity upon a nobleman who had been accustomed only to the staid proprieties of English life, and who could not understand the riotous ways and riotous language of Dublin society.

Toler was made Solicitor-General in 1789, and Attorney-General in 1797. The hair triggers had served him well. He had fought several duels, including one with the famous "Fighting Fitzgerald," whose exploits are so charmingly narrated by Mr. Froude. At this time Irish society was in a state of seething discontent. Amid the political and social ferment curious characters came to the surface, and among them was one Napper Tandy, a notorious demagogue and leader of the United Irishmen. Toler now saw his chance. To use the language of Truthful James, "he went for that heathen Chinese." He did not hit Napper, but he frightened that noble patriot, which to the Government was equally satisfactory.

Having thus done the State some service by abusing, shooting, or frightening the patriotic party, the Attorney-General lost no time in bringing forward his claims for preferment. As a fitting reward for his exertions it was proposed to make him Chief Justice; but Lord Clare, who possessed some public spirit—as even his bitterest enemies admitted—warmly protested.

"Make him a Chief Justice!" said he, with natural indignation. "Oh no! If he must mount the bench make him a bishop, or an archbishop—or anything but a Chief Justice!"

But votes were valuable; the Government feared to make an enemy of their redoubtable Attorney; and the hair triggers carried the day.

It might have been expected that on his elevation to the comparative ease and obscurity of the judicial bench, the Chief Justice of Ireland would adopt the grave, dignified, and impartial manner becoming his high office. But the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin. Lord Norbury was still John Toler. The hair triggers remained to the fore. When any one ventured to question his patriotism in supporting the Act of Union, he would say:

"Name any hour before my Court opens."

Yet his temper was not easily ruffled, even upon the subject of the Union. On being charged by a lady with selling his country, he replied:

"Certainly, madam, I have sold my country. It was lucky for me I had a country to sell. I wish I had another."

His Court was the most extraordinary in the kingdom. Puffing out his cheeks at the end of every sentence, the Judge sat punning and perspiring, firing off his jokes right, left, and centre; the Bar caught the contagion and carried on the fun; the spectators applauded with truly Irish enthusiasm; the very prisoners could not help laughing, and altogether there was a terrible din. On one occasion a witness was asked his business.

"I keep a racket court," was the answer.

"So do I! So do I!" instantly exclaimed Lord Norbury, amid general laughter.

There was a daily visitor to the Court of Common Pleas who largely contributed to the fun. This was a gentleman who laboured under the hallucination that he was the real Lord Norbury, the Chief Justice being nothing but an impostor. The Judge endured his rival's antics with great good humour, until the latter attempted to take possession of the bench, when the order would be given: "Jackson, turn Lord Norbury out of Court!" And the intruder was forthwith ejected, to reappear next day as aggressive as ever.

Punning and joking had become part of Toler's being. He looked at everything from a ludicrous standpoint.

Walking to Court one morning he saw a crowd on the quay.

"What's all this about?" he demanded.

Somebody replied: "A tailor has been trying to drown himself."

"What a fool," exclaimed Norbury, "to leave his hot goose for a cold duck!"

He liked clients to come to his Court,

and would not discourage them by "non-suiting." Pressed by a barrister named Wallace to nonsuit a plaintiff, he decided to let the case go to the jury.

"I do believe," cried the disappointed counsel, "your lordship has not the courage to nonsuit."

"You say, Mr. Wallace," returned the heir of the hair triggers, "you don't think I'd have courage to nonsuit. I tell you I have courage to shoot and courage to nonshoot, but I'll not nonshoot for you."

In Ireland "suit" is often pronounced "shoot," especially among the lower orders.

Wallace was afterwards horsewhipped by Major Macnamara, near Nelson's Pillar in Sackville Street. He applied for a criminal information against the Major.

"Certainly he shall have it," said Lord Norbury; "the Court is bound to protect any one who has bled under the gallant Nelson."

Yet Norbury was not a true humorist, for he lacked the power of sympathy. Careless of his own life, he valued neither the lives nor the feelings of others. In fact he had the reputation of being "a hanging Judge." Dining once in the company of Curran, he said:

"That beef appears tough. Has it been hung?"

"No, my lord," was the ready and apt reply, "you have not tried it."

During the conduct of a case, Harry Grady was annoyed by some remarks of the Chief Justice, and took his revenge thus:

"The incident which has just occurred reminds me, my lord, of a judge I once heard of who was never known to weep but once, and that was in a theatre."

"Deep tragedy, I suppose, Mr. Grady?"

"No, indeed, my lord. It was at the 'Beggars' Opera,' when Macheath was relieved!"

The insinuation told, for everybody felt that Norbury was the man.

Once travelling with John Parsons they passed a gibbet—not an infrequent sight in those days when rebels were hung by the score.

"Parsons," said Norbury, with a chuckle, pointing to the gibbet, "where would you be now if every man had his due?"

"Alone in my carriage," was Parsons's significant reply.

As to the Chief Justice's hospitality, Phillips tells a capital story, which also illustrates his readiness of resource. Ireland

is the most hospitable country in the world; and Lord Norbury was the most hospitable of men. His invitations were numerous and cordial; but they were always to his country seat, because, ill-natured persons said, his town house was inconveniently near. Be that as it may, an honest old couple accepted in good faith his lordship's pressing invitation to spend a week with him at Cabra, and took a considerable quantity of baggage with them. The generous host grasped the situation at once when he saw the lady's maid, the imperial, and the array of boxes. Rushing forward, he took the old people by the hand most affectionately.

"My kind friends—my dear old friends—this is so very like you. I am delighted to see you. Now, no excuses—not a word—not a word. I must positively insist on—your staying to dinner."

A gentleman came to him for a subscription of a shilling to help in paying the funeral expenses of a poor attorney.

"What!" said Norbury, "only a shilling to bury an attorney? There's a guinea; go and bury a score of them!"

It is to be feared that this retort has been fathered on the wrong man. Though his lordship did not love attorneys, he loved his guineas too well to part with them so easily.

His judgements and addresses to the jury were usually an odd mixture of law, levity, and nonsense. His knowledge of law was very superficial, and he had a supreme contempt for legal arguments except when they afforded an opening for a witicism. Once, after listening a whole day to very learned and ingenious pleading, he thus concluded his "judgement":

"I must say, in conclusion, that counsel have done their duty. They are not merely all good, but they are all best. I can make no distinction. However, as to their cases, and their crotchets, and their quiddities, and their knotty points, they are every one of them—like a hare in Tipperary—to be found in fern (Fearne)."

On another occasion his address was interrupted by the braying of an ass. Unaware of the nature of the interruption, he stopped and asked:

"What noise is that?"

"Merely the echo of the court, my lord," was Curran's sarcastic reply.

Towards the close of Lord Norbury's career the burly figure of Dan O'Connell was coming to the front in Irish politics. Dan did not like the Chief Justice, and the

Chief Justice was not passionately fond of Dan; but their fencing was always done in good humour. Though "the Liberator" was a far abler man, Norbury "scored off him" sometimes. A report got into circulation that Dan had avoided a duel by surrendering to the police. While this rumour was current, a cause in which he was engaged came before the Chief Justice.

"Pardon me, my lord," said he in answer to a remark from the bench, "I am afraid your lordship does not apprehend me."

"Pardon me also," retorted his lordship, "no one is more easily apprehended than Mr. O'Connell." A pause, and then slowly and emphatically: "Whenever he wishes to be apprehended!"

Hearing that the Chief Justice's faculties were decaying, the Lord Lieutenant requested him to resign. Norbury asked for a postponement to consult a friend. The postponement was granted; but the friend was in India, and—a year was gained!

Alas for the futility of human dodges! There was an enemy in the gate waiting to pounce upon the aged Judge. During a trial for murder he was literally caught napping, having fallen asleep upon the bench. Dan O'Connell instantly seized the opportunity, and despatched a petition to Parliament for the removal of the somnolent Chief Justice. Yielding to the pressure thereupon brought to bear, Lord Norbury reluctantly resigned; but he marched out with the honours of war, being created an Earl on his retirement in 1827.

Thus passed away from the theatre of public affairs a man who, for nigh half

a century, had played a prominent part in the history of his country. Without wealth, genius, learning, or eloquence, he fought his way to the top of his profession—a profession which, if he did not adorn, he enlivened. Beginning life on fifty pounds and a pair of hair triggers, he ended it peacefully in his bed, having founded two peerages and amassed an ample fortune. Since his time the conditions of Irish public life have changed; the days of duelling are over; the Four Courts are now respectably dull, and no longer resound to the drollery of Bench and Bar; but the spirit that animated John Toler still survives to darken and perplex the issues of Irish politics.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XLII.

THE room was very still; even the clock upon the mantelpiece was not going, so that not even a low tick disturbed the perfect quiet. It was a sitting-room in one of the Liverpool hotels, and quite alone in it was Clemence. She was sitting near the window, motionless, her hands clasped tightly together on her knee. Her face was lifted slightly towards the sky, and its calm, broken now and again by a slight quiver of the lips, was that of intense absorption. Clemence's was one of those natures in which great mental suffering of any kind passes instinctively into unformed prayer; and she was praying now with her whole being, with no faintest consciousness of herself or her mental attitude.

She had been sitting there alone and motionless for more than an hour, when a touch fell upon the handle of the door. She started violently, and rose involuntarily to her feet as it opened to admit Falconer. She did not speak; all her agony of questioning seemed to have passed into the eyes she fixed upon him, and into those tightly-clasped hands.

Falconer crossed the room quickly to her, and spoke as though in answer to audible words.

"I have found him!" he said. "There has been some delay. The boat will not leave until to-morrow, and till then he is here."

A breath of unutterable relief and

thanksgiving broke from Clemence's white lips, and she let her face fall forward for a moment on her hands. Then she lifted it again, tremulous and shaken. "Is it—right—that he should go?" she said.

"It is necessary!" returned Falconer sternly. But the sternness was not for her.

A look of trouble and perplexity passed into her face; her lips were parted to speak again when a door at the other end of the room opened sharply—not the door by which Falconer had entered, but a second, leading, presumably, into a bedroom—and Mrs. Romaine appeared. The rigidity of her self-control had given place, apparently, to a consuming fever. Her eyes were glittering, the dry skin seemed to be too tightly drawn across her sharpened features. There was no paint upon her now—no mask, less tangible but no less effective, of artificiality of expression. It was the very woman, stripped of all the trappings of her life, bearing the ravages of past struggles thick upon her, driven to bay, and braced to hold the struggle on which she was entering with the last breath in her body. She was still dressed for walking, and the contrast between the smart, somewhat youthful, apparel which she had always affected, and her face, was terrible to see.

She came straight up to Falconer, utterly unconscious, apparently, as far as feeling and realisation constitute consciousness, of Clemence's presence. "You have found him?" she said, and the words were less a question than an assertion. "Let us go at once. Stop, though!" she added abruptly, laying a burning hand on Falconer's arm as though in the haste and pressure of her own impulses she ascribed a similar impatience to him. "I had

better know the facts first. What has he told you?"

Falconer hesitated. His words, when he spoke, ignored her final question, and answered the idea which vibrated behind every word of her speech. He glanced at Clemence as he began to speak as though he wished his words to apply to her also.

"I do not think," he said, "that anything will be gained by your seeing him—except extreme distress for all concerned. I fear there is nothing to be done!"

He had spoken very firmly as though the moment had arrived, in his estimation, for that stand on manly judgement which he had involuntarily postponed for so long, and he paused as though to accentuate the weight of his words.

Mrs. Romaine, with a gesture of irrepressible, tortured impatience, but otherwise with no recognition whatever of his having spoken, repeated her question:

"What has he told you?"

Clemence's eyes, fixed upon Falconer's face, dilated slightly, and then the shadow of a smile touched her parted lips.

"I fear there is no doubt that it is a bad affair," continued Falconer. "There are forged documents connected with it, and misappropriation of money fraudulently come by; and detection seems to be inevitable. His only hope of safety lies in flight."

As though with the very tangibility and imminence of the danger she had come forth to meet Mrs. Romaine's spirit rose higher, the only sort of change brought to her face by the words was an intensifying of all its previous characteristics of growing courage and determination. From Clemence's lips the little tremulous light had died quenched in such a horror of vicarious shame, of pity, love, and anguish unspeakable, as seemed to freeze her where she stood.

"The facts! The facts!" The words came from Mrs. Romaine sharp and tense, seeming to put aside and ignore any extraneous comment or opinion.

Falconer hesitated again for a moment and scanned her face closely, absolutely unconscious of his own incapacity for reading what was written there. So far was he from an adequate conception of the realities of the situation, that he thought that a plain statement of details would crush out for ever the hope of which he was conscious in her. And he decided that such instantaneous crushing was the only mercy he could show her.

Gravely and concisely, with no unnecessary comment, he told her the whole story as he had gathered it half an hour earlier from Julian's incoherent, despairing words. He finished and paused, holding himself braced for the outbreak of despair which he expected.

His words were followed by a dead silence. His eyes were fixed on Mrs. Romaine with a vague fear for her reason, and he felt rather than saw that Clemence had turned away and was standing with her face hidden in her hands. Mrs. Romaine's brows had contracted as if in intense thought, and her eyes were extraordinarily bright and keen. At last, with no slightest relaxation of the intent calculation of her face, she asked one or two questions as to details of business procedure, the words coming from her sharp and distinct; questions of which Falconer, as he answered them, tried in vain to see the drift. Then she moved with a gesture of determination, so self-absorbed that it seemed to isolate her utterly.

"Take me to him at once!" she said.

A sharp exclamation broke from Falconer, and, as she moved towards the door, he followed her hastily, indescribably disturbed and confused by so entirely unexpected a course of action.

"To what purpose?" he said quickly. "I beg of you to be advised by me. The boy must go! Nothing can be gained but a parting——"

Mrs. Romaine turned upon him and faced him suddenly.

"I am here to see my son," she said, and there was something in her voice—rather in what its intense restraint suggested than in its tones themselves—absolutely dominating and conclusive. "You came to help me. Take me to him, or tell me where to find him."

Intensely annoyed and disapproving; keenly alive to the fear that Julian, so taken by surprise, might impute to him some definitely treacherous intention in withholding, as he had done, the fact that he was not alone; Falconer yet felt himself powerless. He had no shadow of a right to stand between mother and son. He had made his stand, and he might as effectually have opposed himself to the wind. His words, his judgement, were as nothing to her. That he should so far fail to carry into effect his conception of his duty as her escort, as to let her go alone was, of course, impossible in his eyes. He made a sternly unwilling sign

to the effect that he would perforce accompany her, and then, as she passed quickly out of the room, he looked at Clemence. There was a stunned look upon her face now; she did not even glance at him in answer, but she moved mechanically, as it seemed, and like a woman walking in her sleep, and followed Mrs. Romaine.

Not one word was spoken by either of the trio until they stood, a quarter of an hour later, before a rather dingy door in a dreary passage of an unpretentious and obscure private hotel. Then Falconer spoke in a low, stern tone.

"Here!" he said, indicating the door before them.

Mrs. Romaine moved swiftly forward and turned the handle. For one instant, as the door opened, there was a vision of a dull, bare little sitting-room, touched with a strange glory by a red ray from the setting sun, which slanted right across it; and in the middle of the room, in the full light of that red ray, which fell with an almost weird effect of irradiation upon his attitude of despair, Julian sitting by the table, his head buried on his outstretched arms. For an instant only the picture was visible; then Julian turned his head sharply and sprang to his feet with a cry. His mother was advancing rapidly towards him, but it was not his mother that he saw. It was the figure behind her with the dazed white face all breaking up now into quivering lines. It was to that figure that he stretched out his hands with the hoarse, heart-broken sob:

"Clemmie! Clemmie! They've told you!"

Before the words were uttered, Clemence had rushed past Mrs. Romaine, and was clinging to him in such a sudden agony of sobs and tears as seemed to rend her very heart.

Mrs. Romaine stopped abruptly. Falconer, who was close to her with his back to the door which he had shut swiftly on Julian's cry, saw a spasm of pain cut across the concentration of her face for an instant, and in the flash of anger and impatience which succeeded it, she seemed to recognise Clemence's presence practically for the first time. She fell back a step or two, waiting with contemptuous self-control, her eyes fixed upon the pair before her as they clung together, and Julian tried brokenly and despairingly to soothe the pitiful abandonment of grief with which Clemence was shaken. His own distress increased with every incoherent

word of self-reproach he uttered, and it was a sense of his anguish that seemed at last to reach Clemence, and produce in her a woman's instinct towards the suppression of her own pain. She disengaged herself gently, forcing back the heavy sob that trembled on her lips, and looked from Julian towards Mrs. Romaine with a tacit recognition of his mother's claims which was as beautiful as it was instinctive.

"You will listen!" she said in a choked, beseeching voice, "you will listen and come back!"

She turned away as she spoke, making him a sign that he should not speak to her; and as she drew away from him Mrs. Romaine advanced rapidly, every movement, every line of her face, every tone of her voice, claiming as an inalienable right her son's attention. Her face was very hard, far harder than it had been before that spasm of pain had shaken it, and there was no touch of emotion in her hard, quick voice. She seemed to have put all sentiment deliberately aside.

"Julian," she said, "you have made a terrible mistake! You are taking just the one false step that would be absolutely irretrievable. You must come back to town at once!"

Her manner; her voice; some influence from the long past days when her word, for all her affectation of weak indulgence, had been his law; had arrested his attention almost without his own consent. He stood now looking at her; looking at her across such a gulf of ignorance, mistake, and wrong as had swallowed even that bitterness with which he had once regarded her, leaving him absolutely cold and dead to her.

"Town and I have parted company, mother!" he said. He spoke hoarsely, but the emotion in his tone was the reflex of that through which he had just passed in meeting Clemence; his manner was even callous.

"That would be true indeed," was the quick answer, "if you had succeeded in leaving England! Not only town and you, but life and you—everything that makes life worth living—would have parted company! To go away now is to cut your own throat!"

Julian turned to Falconer.

"Haven't you told them?" he said thickly. "Don't they know that—that is done?"

Falconer drew a step nearer.

"Your mother knows——" he began;

but Mrs. Romaine interposed, lifting her hand peremptorily without even glancing at him.

"I know everything," she said. "I know that you are in hideous danger, and if you run away from it it is indeed all over with you. You must face it; you must defy it!"

As though in her last words she had touched and given form and life to the very core of the determination which had nerved her since she had first read Julian's letter that morning, her voice rose as she spoke them into a ring of indomitable courage, vibrating with the very triumph of that defiance of which she spoke. Her slight, haggard physique seemed to expand, to gain in dignity and power, as the whole room seemed to fill with the magnetism of her intense resolution. There was an instant's pause, and then an exclamation broke alike from Julian and from Falconer. Julian's was almost derisive in its absolute repudiation of her words; Falconer's was sternly incredulous. Clemence was standing a little apart. No sound came from her, but she lifted her face suddenly and turned it towards Mrs. Romaine. A vague horror and confusion had dawned in her eyes.

Before the annihilating words with which Falconer obviously intended to follow up his first ejaculation could be uttered, Mrs. Romaine was speaking again—in a rapid, business-like tone now, but always with that ring of triumph behind it.

"You must come back with me to-night and take up your position as if nothing could shake it. You must fight for your credit and your social status tooth and nail. When you have lost them you have lost everything! You have not lost them yet, and no risk is too great to run for their retention."

"Not penal servitude?" asked Julian, with a ghastly smile.

"Not penal servitude, not hanging—if that were the risk," returned his mother passionately. "What are you better off if you escape—disgraced, ostracised, ruined beyond all hope of reclamation—than you would be in a convict's cell? What would you have to live for—to hope for? When you have lost your position with the world you have lost everything. What does it matter that you go down in one wave rather than another?" She paused a moment, battling with her fierce horror and repulsion. Then she went on again in another tone, eager and decided. "But the risk is not so frightful after all," she

said. "Show it a bold front and we shall triumph over it! Now, listen to me, Julian. This other man—this man Ramsay—was the actual forger!"

She paused for an answer, and apparently the insistence of her tone forced one from Julian in spite of himself.

"As far as the actual commission of the forgery goes—yes," he said sullenly. "But—"

"Then what is there to prove—to prove, mind—that you were a party to it?"

Julian glanced round at Clemence as if involuntarily. Then he looked recklessly back at his mother and laughed harshly.

"The facts——" he began.

His mother caught up the words.

"The facts? Yes!" she said. "But if the facts are denied? Can they be proved? If you face this meeting and say that you yourself have been deceived? Even if it should come to a prosecution there are always loopholes! With good counsel and facing it out ourselves unflinchingly, you would come through untouched! It is the only chance, Julian, and we must dare it."

## THE OLD PORTSMOUTH ROAD.

THE way from London to Portsmouth was busy and well frequented, if not from the earliest periods of our annals, anyhow from the first origin of the Royal Navy as a permanent force. It can vie with any other for picturesqueness and for varied and charming scenery, and it is rather surprising that in the revival of road coaching, nobody has ventured, except for a single season, to run a four-horse coach from London all the way to Portsmouth. The first half of the route as far as Guildford is, indeed, favoured with a very good coach, the "New Times," which, starting from Piccadilly every morning at eleven, sticks to its work in fair or foul weather, and affords one of the pleasantest and most varied drives out of London, all along the time-honoured track of the old Portsmouth Road.

The palmy days of the old Portsmouth Road were in the time of the great French war. The road to Dover might be grass-grown and almost deserted, and that to Rye traversed only by numerous bands of smugglers, but the Portsmouth Road was all alive, both by day and night, while an incessant stream of traffic poured to and fro between the great naval arsenal and the metropolis. Admirals dashed along

in post-chaises; Jack, the man-o'-war's man, home from a cruise, scattered his prize-money broadcast along the way to London, dashing along, perhaps, with half-a-dozen comrades sprawling about the rigging of a chaise and four; while his captain modestly took his passage home outside the mail. Peter Simple, that innocent young reefer, took the day coach for Portsmouth at the "Elephant and Castle"; the night mail started from the "Angel," by St. Clement's Danes, a once famous coaching house, the very site of which is now swallowed up in the precincts of the Law Courts. "Flying machines" left the "Spread Eagle" in Gracechurch Street, a sign that by no means typified the flight of the machine, which after rattling briskly over the City pavement, subsided into a crawl over the heavy country road.

It was country then when you got out of the Borough, from whose old-fashioned timber-built inns heavy waggons with eight horses or more rolled forth each night, or with the first dawn of morning, crammed with all kinds of goods for the busy traders on Portsmouth Hard, with heavy baggage for the officers of the fleet, with warrant officers' wives and a bevy of noisy children. Even now, when your vehicle has cleared the Wandsworth Road with its swarming population, the way over Putney Heath and Wimbledon Common is bright and full of charm.

When the old mill, now renewed into youth, is passed, a kind of forest scene opens out, with the glades and tufted heights of Richmond Park and Combe Woods rising on either hand.

It was hereabouts that the famed highwayman, Jerry Abershaw, used to ply his trade. The "Bald-faced Stag," his favourite house of call, was on the roadside between this and Kingston, and when he finally met his fate at the gallows on Kennington Common, his body was hung in chains by the roadside, and there it swung in the sun, and wind, and rain, and three years after, when Pitt and Tierney fought their Sunday duel on the Common, there the bones still hung, it is said, in the sight of the distinguished combatants.

And in the way of duels what spot can compare with this corner of Wimbledon Common? Even in sight of the old mill the Duke of York stood up to receive the fire of Colonel Lennox, afterwards Duke of Richmond. Here Canning and Castlereagh exchanged shots about some affair of

political intrigue, while in Combe Wood close by, Sir Francis Burdett and John Paul winged each other with pistol-shots, and then drove amicably back to town in the same carriage. Close by the mill was fought the last important duel on the English record, when, in 1840, Lord Cardigan severely wounded Captain Tuckett, on the score of some regimental squabbles in which a black bottle conspicuously figured.

Up and down hill soon brings us to Kingston, a town that has marvellously increased of late years, and seems to have quite outgrown its humble Town Hall of the good old country pattern. Now, with its public promenades and model sanitary and drainage appliances, Kingston seems to take a strong lead among suburban towns. It has always its ancient fame as a seat of Saxon kings, and its famed coronation stone, which pilgrims sometimes visit from distant lands, while people of the neighbourhood pass it by without a thought. And Kingston has always its unrivalled frontage to the river where it takes one of its most gracious curves, the river dotted with white sails and backed by the fine trees of Hampton Court Park, which, as another triumph for Kingston, is now open to the general public.

After passing Kingston we are in a kind of Dutch country, half land and half water, with branches of the River Mole threading their way among thickets and shrubberies, and with boats hanging to the banks, and riverside cottages showing pleasantly here and there. This is Ditton Marsh, and the road presently quits its level reaches to mount the hill towards Esher. It is a quiet enough road in a general way, but now and then you may find it swarming with its tens of thousands. For the wooded knoll which forms such a prominent feature in the landscape, and which has all the appearance of some ancient tumulus, marks the site of Sandown Park, of which the velvet lawns and close-cropped turf stretch below one of the most splendid amphitheatres possible, for the celebration of our great national sport.

Esher itself, still a little quaint and countrified, is on the top of the hill, and looks down upon Esher Place, where among the green meadows

embraced  
By the soft windings of the silent Mole,

Bishop Waynflete, of Winchester, built a palace, in which Wolsey took refuge immediately after his disgrace. The fine



gateway of brick, beneath which the great Cardinal passed in his humility, is still there; and the whole was for sale the other day, going to the highest bidder at the mart, with all its historical associations as a part of the bargain.

Pleasant is the descent from Esher by a winding road that leads to a quiet, shaded under-world of grassy glades and noble groups of trees that screen from view the fine mansion of Claremont, with its air of almost melancholy seclusion. The house may have been gay enough for its first builder and tenant, Sir John Vanbrugh, a wit and writer of comedies which were light enough, if his buildings were heavy. But Sir John, if he laid many a heavy load on mother earth, had still his notions of grandeur and magnificence. And "Claremont" the house became from the time it was purchased by Pelham Lord Clare, afterwards Duke of Newcastle; and the mount which suggested the name, crowned by a fantastic kind of tower, is all that is left of the house "that Jack built." For Lord Clive, with the plunder of the Indies, bought the place, and pulling down the house, gave his architect carte blanche to build him a new one regardless of expense. That architect was Capability Brown, so called because his favourite word was the "capabilities" of this place or the other, for "landskips," vistas, lakes, temples, and so on, Brown being more of a landscape gardener than an architect, and Claremont, it is said, the only great house he ever designed. The walls were built of a mighty thickness, as the rumour in the country went to keep out his satanic majesty, who might be expected at any time to claim the person of the great Nabob. After Clive's death, the house, in the nature of a white elephant, was passed from one to another, till it was purchased for the Crown as a residence for the Princess Charlotte and her young husband Prince Leopold. The sorrowful death of the Princess in childbirth has left its melancholy mark over the place, and the house passed a twilight kind of existence as the residence of the ex-King of the French and the exiled Orleans family, and even now as the home of a widowed Princess retains something of its traditional seclusion.

Leaving Claremont, the road passes over Esher Common, and a broken, up and down country, till it reaches the river level again at Cobham Street. The "Street" is not our "Portsmouth Street,"

but refers to a more ancient highway, running from east to west, and pointing in the direction of Chertsey Abbey. The modern highway, taking a sudden turn to the right, follows the ancient street to the bridge over the Mole—a very ancient bridge in origin, if tradition is to be credited, although the existing structure dates only from the eighteenth century. For the bridge, it is said, was first built by good Queen Maud, wife of Henry the First—our Saxon Princess of the Royal line of Cerdic—for the good of the soul of one of her maidens drowned in crossing the ford. The bridge is at the foot of Pain's Hill, a seat famous for its elaborate gardens, which combine all the artificial beauties—lakes, ruins, grottoes, towers—so much in favour in a former age.

From this point we may make acquaintance with Surrey commons once wild enough, but now being gradually tamed by enterprising builders and aggressive lords of manors. Ockham Village comes next with its fine old church, and an Italian palace close by, long unfinished and deserted, the history of which, short as it is, might furnish materials for a modern romance.

Now we are at Ripley, a quiet, pleasant village, with a green of quite phenomenal extent; a quiet village, that is, for five days in the week, but for the other two the great resort of London cyclists, who come down at the week end literally in their thousands. They bathe in the river; they are found stretched about all the pretty nooks, which are many, in the adjacent country; they are to be found criticising the ruins of Newark Abbey a few miles away, set among a perfect network of streams. Old churches, too, attract some, and there are cyclists' Sundays and church parades at times, and cyclists are invited to come to the various services "just as they are," for "go-to-meeting" suits are necessarily absent from their equipment. Something of the greatness of Ripley as a cyclists' centre may be due to the good foundation of the old Portsmouth Road, and to the generally easy gradients of the run from London; but the chief part of the popularity of the village is due to the excellent catering for the material wants of the London crowd.

After leaving Ripley the road, although pleasant enough, presents nothing remarkable, unless you may catch a glimpse across a bend in the river of Sutton Place, a fine sixteenth-century mansion in beautifully

moulded brickwork, built by a Sir Thomas Weston, father of the unhappy youth who was executed for his connection with the scandals anent Anne Boleyn. But the villas of Guildford are soon in evidence, and the steep High Street, with its clock and quaint Guild Hall; and the bridge at the bottom over the River Wey, with boats, and willows, and breweries; and a great watermill above bridge, which goes grinding on as it did in the days of the Conquest; and beyond a glimpse of white cliffs and the bluff shoulder of down, on a spur of which stands the square Norman keep of Guildford Castle.

A Royal seat once upon a time, and then a county prison, there is—except for a gateway of no great antiquity, and the shell of the old keep, which is seventy feet high and a favourite resort of crows and jackdaws—nothing to show for the once extensive structure. But the caverns are there, vast excavations in the chalk beneath, of unknown origin and antiquity.

After you cross the Wey there is a dusty road on the right that leads Farnham way, but the old track may be found which leads along a delightful grassy ride, with magnificent views all round, being the very ridge of the Hog's Back, stretching for miles and miles, like some great earth-work reared by giants. Our way leads straight on, by a sweetly pleasant road, now confessedly the Portsmouth Road, and past St. Catherine's Hill, where stands a ruined chapel on the brow, and a delightful prospect therefrom, showing the windings of the river and the rich broken hills, with the stern-looking Norman chapel of St. Martha showing against the sky. The tradition goes that each of these chapels was built on the same night, the saints whose names they bear taking it in turns to use the hammer, which they threw to each other across the valley, a distance of two or three miles. On the other side of the road rise the woods of Loseley, and half a mile or so distant is the fine old mansion, once the seat of the Mores, and noted for a great find of historic documents in its long-closed muniment room, a collection known to antiquaries as the Loseley MSS.

Now we are at Godalming, pleasantest and most picturesque of little towns, with environs that are almost cloying in their richness and beauty. But the road takes a prosaic turn and we lose sight of Godalming, and then an un-

eventful level a few miles long brings us to the village of Witley, which may be looked upon as the metropolis of the land of landscape painters. Here the artists have set up their tents in every picturesque nook; chalets, cottages, Elizabethan mansions, substantial enough, always comfortable, often luxurious, and sometimes palatial, but all evolved from palette and easel. You can hardly take any sunken lane where the hill country breaks away into the wide woodland plain, bounded by visionary hills on the far horizon, without coming across suggestions of this favourite paysagiste and the other; the very dip of the road seems familiar, and recalls Burlington House or the Water-Colour Exhibition.

The Portsmouth Road, however, does not dip. Those who first made the track, whether Britons, Romans, or Saxons, knew better than to descend into that wild woodland plain. The people below, perhaps, were not friendly to strangers, and a flight of arrows or onslaught of spears might end your journey unpleasantly; and this danger escaped, there was almost the certainty of being quagged in the tenacious mud. This latter consideration continued effective up to the days of turnpike acts and toll-bars, and thus the Portsmouth Road, instead of turning aside, as the railway subsequently, to the picturesque little town of Haslemere, keeps on its way over the expanse of Thursley Common, and breasts the heights which rise in towering magnificence in front of us.

At Thursley everybody should pay a visit to the churchyard, and to the tomb of the unknown sailor who was murdered in crossing the dark brow of Hindhead. A rude but spirited bas-relief on an upright stone, representing the fatal deed, is still in a fair state of preservation, with its inscription, "In memory of a generous but unfortunate sailor who was barbarously murdered on Hindhead on September 24th, 1786, by three villains, after he had liberally treated them and promised them further assistance on the road to Portsmouth."

This will put you in a proper frame of mind for making the ascent of Hindhead, which, dark and menacing, rears its bold front against the sky. If you approach it near sunset when its dark bulk is thrown out by the evening glow, when the mist begins to rise in the tremendous hollow known as the Devil's Punch Bowl, while the road shows as a

white thread winding along the edge of that unholy chasm, there is something in the weird, uncanny aspect of the scene to give a delightful thrill and cold shiver. By-and-by you stand breathless and exhausted at the very summit, nine hundred odd feet in one steep grade, and beneath the granite cross erected by one of the Judges of the land to the memory of three poor malefactors.

A wild country it is that we reach from this windy height, hill piled upon hill in a way to astonish those who think we have nothing but tame pastoral scenery in these southern counties. Over there Frensham Ponds catch the sunset glow, made by the monks of Waverley lang syne for fishy purposes. And nearer, those strange conical mamelons called the Devil's Jumps add to the weirdness of the scene. Some years ago an astronomer fixed his observatory within one of these famous jumps, a wind-gauge revolved there noiselessly night and day, and all kinds of apparatus, costly and recondite, were stored in that solitary mound. The astronomer is dead, and his apparatus scattered to the four winds, and the story of his sojourn in the wilderness, and what befel him there, if it could be told here, would in no way detract from the diablerie that seems to be the reigning influence in this wild scene.

The road runs on, solitary and wild, till Liphook is reached, where there is good accommodation for man and beast. Mr. Pepys visited Liphook before our time, in fact in 1668, when he took a trip Portsmouth way by the Council's order about Sir Thomas Allen's going to Algier. He got to Liphook late over Hindhead, having an old man as guide in the coach with him, "but in great fear," and no wonder! At Liphook, however, he found good honest people, and a good supper, and so to bed. But here we come upon the railway again, which has crept round by Haslemere, and few people now make use of the road, which keeps to the crest of the hills with fine views of the rich Sussex plain below.

With a sharp twist and turn the old Portsmouth Road, half-a-dozen miles further on, enters the good old town of Petersfield. A very ancient borough is Petersfield, with a fine market-place dignified with an equestrian statue of William the Third, while an archway under some curious old houses with round windows, now gay with flowers, leads directly to the

church porch. The church is large and handsome, much restored, but still with good original features, and its proportions and ornamentation bespeak a former state of prosperity and wealth, due no doubt to an early share in the cloth manufacture of the west of England. It holds early charters from the Earls of Gloucester and from King John, who acquired through his wife the honours and profits of that Earldom. But that early prosperity declined, and the town was little worth till the Portsmouth Road, and the sailors and officers passing to and fro, and the stage-coaches, machines, and waggons, brought the place into a different kind of business. Now it is the centre of a fairly prosperous dairy and grazing country, and there are hop grounds at Buriton to vary the agricultural round.

But the Portsmouth Road seems to have a street to itself apart from the general body of the town, and here the old inns are clustered, many closed and divided into rows of sufficiently roomy private houses, and the "Crown," once gorgeous in gildings and colours, now does duty over a butcher's shop. But the "Dolphin" survives, and you can fancy you see Admirals and Post-Captains looking over the wire blinds, and coaches and post-chaises drawn up before the old-fashioned portico, and above the roofs and chimneys and the swinging signs you can see the brown flank of the down rising against the sky. It is Butser Hill that is before you, where the chalk downs rise in a long serried range that offers fine defensive positions for an army in the field.

Pleasant homely cottages with gardens full of old-fashioned flowers border the road as you pass out of Petersfield, and the quiet, lonely hills close in upon you as the road sinks gradually into a bottom, to rise again sharply over the flank of Butser Hill. But the road is not altogether deserted. Now it is a bronzed-looking fellow who is limping along—the fireman of some trading steamer, who is tramping away to London, hoping to get another berth. Again, it is a little family of tramps, a woman with a baby slung over her shoulders and a little urchin toiling by her side, while the man walks sullenly on in front. There are roadside inns here and there, relics of earlier days, of which the sign of the "Jolly Sailor" suggests a spectral reminiscence. These grassy margins where the hedge-bank throws a convenient shade; often must

Jack, sober perforce, and his prize-money all spent, have stretched his wearied limbs on their sward as he tramped back to his ship along the old Portsmouth Road. And all these sheltered spots are marked by the fire circles of the wandering tribes, more numerous than one would suspect, which roam about our highways. Now an old frying-pan meets the view, now an old boot or tattered waistcoat, trifling articles of baggage abandoned on some forced march.

We pass through the forest of Bere without knowing that it is a forest at all, and again there is a stiff climb up the flank of the Portsmouth Hills. But once on the top of the hill, what a splendid view meets the eye! Portsea Castle below, and creeks and inlets without number, the harbour brimming full with a high tide, despatch-boats and torpedo-boats bustling in and out, the forts beyond, and the sparkling sea, and the great warships lying grimly at anchor. A light haze of smoke rises from the clustered roofs of Portsmouth Town; the floating bridge is crossing from Gosport with a regiment of soldiers on board, giving a touch of carmine to the reflections from the water. There are redcoats, too, marching to and fro on the Common, and the faint music of a military band is wafted from below. It is Portsmouth! and we may report ourselves as having "come on board."

### THE TELAUTOGRAPH.

To telegraph is, of course, to write at a distance, if we take the literal equivalent of the Greek derivative; but then, writing in this connection has not meant caligraphy. It is one thing to transmit signals or symbols which convey the sense of words, phrases, and sentences, to a distant correspondent; it is quite another thing to transmit words and sentences exactly as they may be indited.

The dot-and-dash printer of the Morse alphabet was the first, or almost the first, recorder in concrete of an electrically impelled message. The type-writer was simply a developement by which the Morse alphabet was translated for ordinary readers. But although receiving instruments have been enabled to record in writing, after a manner, the messages they received, they have not reproduced the actual writing of the sender. And it is to achieve the transmission of facsimiles that

telegraphists and scientists have been striving for a generation. In fact, the great dream of telegraphy has long been to be literally worthy of its name.

The transmission of facsimiles has been done more often than may be generally known. As long as fifty years ago Alexander Bain, of Edinburgh, constructed an instrument for reproducing by electricity characters printed on metal. At the sending end the wires were passed over the metal letters, and at the receiving end the wires were passed over chemically prepared paper. So long as the electric current flowed it caused a decomposition—taking the form of blue marks—in the receiving paper corresponding to the shape of the letters. But Bain used five wires and very large metal letters, like a bill-head, and the receiver produced rather an outline than an exact counterpart of the word in the sender.

Some years later than Bain, Caselli, the Florentine Abbé, produced a very ingenious apparatus. The main feature of it was a pendulum, six feet long, suspended in an iron frame, and having at the end a "bob," or ball of iron, weighing sixteen pounds. On each side of the "bob" was an electro magnet, which caused the pendulum to oscillate, and in oscillating it alternately opened and closed a battery, which was controlled by a circuit-breaker placed over against the upper part of the frame. On each side of the frame, again, was a covered iron tablet—one serving as transmitter, the other as receiver. Over these tablets a pen was caused to pass, receiving its motion by means of rods and levers from the pendulum. Each tablet, too, had a mechanical arrangement giving it a slow motion at right angles to the movement of the pen. The message to be transmitted was written on silver-paper and placed on the transmitting tablet; a sheet of chemically prepared paper of the same size was placed on the receiving tablet at the receiving station. Then the pendulum was set in motion and caused a corresponding movement of the pens at both stations—the current flowing or stopping as the transmitting pen followed the characters on the silver-paper. The right-angle motion of the tablets secured proper spacing.

Caselli's invention was known as the copying telegraph, and various modifications have since been put forward under different names, and with more or less success, working on the same lines. But the

reproduction in facsimile by a copying telegraph is not all that telegraphists want. They desiderate a system whereby characters can be electrically transmitted and reproduced simultaneously with the writing by the sender. That, it will be observed, is a very different thing from what Bain and Caselli succeeded in doing.

The telephone enables us to converse *vivâ voce* with our distant friend, even if he be in Paris or in Belfast. Why should not the telautograph enable us to transmit to him instantaneously the writing of our hand—the written word which will form permanent evidence of our mandate or our contract? Besides, while the telegraph can only be operated by an expert, the telephone is often provokingly indistinct, and at the moment of greatest need frequently refuses to be intelligible. How many an important conversation has begun in wild "Hullo" and ended in wilder anathemas!

The first telautograph—the word is a vile one, but we know of no other to apply, and it is probably not worse than cablegram—was an English invention, that of Mr. E. A. Cowper, in 1876. By Cowper's system the pen was held by the sender as in ordinary writing, and he wrote on strips of paper which moved slowly to the left as they were covered, while, simultaneously at the receiving station, a pen formed characters corresponding to the writing. At the receiving station the pen was supported by a rod attached to an armature between two electro-magnets, upon the variation in the strength of which depended the movement of the pen. These variations were so effected as to give to the receiving pen all the movements of the transmitting pen. This was brought about by each of the electro-magnets being placed in a separate circuit, and the variations in their magnetic strength were influenced by variations in the strength of the current flowing in the circuits, these again being produced by changes in the electrical resistance of the circuits—the strength of a current varying in proportion with the resistance.

Cowper's telautograph, so far as we know, was never brought into practical operation as a business enterprise, but upon it was based the apparatus brought out by Mr. J. H. Robertson, of New York, in 1884, which embodied several improvements. Robertson's system, again, was improved upon by Mr. H. Etheridge, of Pittsburgh, under whose auspices a writing telegraph was some years ago put in operation both in Pittsburgh and in Rochester, U.S. By

this system the sender had to write on a space of one square inch, which was the limit of the movement of the receiving pen, and the characters had to be written on top of each other.

The Etheridge-Robertson system, however, did not "catch on," chiefly because it required a very considerable amount of skill to work it. No ordinary person could transmit intelligible characters by it, and, moreover, it was found inadaptably to long circuits.

It has been reserved for Mr. Elisha Gray, an American professor, to improve upon the inventions of his predecessors—and even upon his own, for he has produced a succession of machines, only to be discarded in favour of something better—and to produce a really practical telautograph which can be used by anybody with a reasonable amount of intelligence. Professor Gray claims to have produced "a page-and-line writing-telegraph system, in contradistinction to a single-line or strip-writing system, and by means of which any one who can handle a pen or pencil may have the work of his hand electrically reproduced at a distance and by a method not materially affected by ordinary changes in the insulation of the circuit."

For the following particulars of this interesting invention we are indebted to a technical description—which we have endeavoured to simplify—given by Mr. William Maver in a recent American scientific journal.

Professor Gray is the author of the name as well as of the instrument, and the present is the fourth machine he has constructed in his efforts to solve the problem with which he has been wrestling for several years. As now perfected, it is said, the instrument may be used by any one at first sight, who has only to write with the sending pencil upon a space five inches wide by four inches long, and the characters are simultaneously reproduced in ink at the receiving station. Drawings, sketches, etc., can be transmitted in facsimile as easily and accurately.

The sender may employ an ordinary lead pencil, near the point of which two silk cords are fastened, and then conveyed, at right angles to each other, into an iron case. Inside the case each cord is wound upon a small drum, mounted upon a vertical shaft. To each shaft is attached a small toothed wheel, which, in turning, causes an electrical contact-point to oscillate, so as to send alternate "pulsations"

of positive and negative magnetic quality through the two wires employed for the transmission of the writing. The number of pulsations imparted depends on the rate at which the toothed wheels are caused to revolve, and this, again, depends on the movement of the pencil held by the sender. If that pencil is moved one inch in the direction of either of the cords, forty of the teeth of the wheel attached to it will pass a given point, and forty "pulsations" will be sent over the wire.

It depends on the direction in which the pencil is moved, whether both the toothed wheels are rotated simultaneously, or whether a greater or lesser number of pulsations are passed along either wire.

The movement of the receiving pen is guided by the rapidity of the pulsations, and upon the number passing over the respective wires, for, as is explained, "the telautograph receiver is an instrument operating in a reverse manner to that of the transmitter, as the receiver of the telephone acts reversely to the transmitter." In the case of the telephone, the air-waves set in motion by the voice cause the diaphragm of the transmitting instrument to send corresponding electrical waves along the wire; and these electrical waves in turn cause vibrations in the diaphragm of the receiving instrument corresponding in quantity to those at the other end, and these vibrations produce the result which we know as sound.

In a somewhat similar way, in the telautograph the movement of the sending pencil sets up in the wires pulsations which pass along and set up similar pulsations in the receiving instrument, causing the receiving pen to move precisely similar to the sending pen. Unlike the telephone, however, the amplitude of movement of the pens at each end is exactly equal, the telephone receiver having much less than that of the transmitter.

We have described the method of despatch, and now as to the result at the receiving station, where other apparatus are needed, including two "polarised relays."

One relay is placed in each of the wires, and each relay controls an escapement connected with a toothed wheel on a vertical shaft, with a small drum, corresponding to the mechanism at the other end. Each drum has attached to it, by cords, an aluminium pen-arm, and these pen-arms are hinged together at the writing point. A small rubber tube connecting with an

ink-well passes through one of the pen-arms (or penholders) to the writing pen, which is really a small glass tube fixed at the junction of the aluminium arms. There are arrangements for properly controlling the supply of ink, and as the pen passes over the surface of the paper in the receiver, its track is marked in ink. The toothed wheels in the receiver are given a slight rotary motion, held in check by the escapements which are governed by the polarised relays, which in turn are controlled by the toothed wheels of the transmitter. Therefore the movements of the transmitting pencil in any direction must be followed by the receiving pen.

This is a summary, omitting technicalities as far as possible, of Mr. Maver's description of this remarkable new instrument, which appears very simple when you know all about it, but the like of which countless telegraphists have striven in vain to produce.

"A notable feature of the telautograph," says Mr. Maver, "is that characters of any description, including plans, sketches, etc., in addition to simple writing, may be transmitted by means of it. This opens a field in which such a system might have a monopoly—the transmission of Chinese and Japanese writing. Since the Chinese alphabet consists of many thousands of characters, it would be impracticable to employ such a code of signals as those composing the Morse alphabet for telegraphing in that language. There might be required for a single character, perhaps, fifty dots and as many dashes. When it is now desired to despatch a message in China the sender imparts in Chinese speech or writing the substance of his message to the telegraph operator, who refers to a code-book containing Chinese characters representing the phrases most current among merchants, and transmits in English the numbers corresponding to those phrases, forwarding the numbers to the proper station. There the operator, by the aid of a duplicate code-book, re-translates the message into Chinese, and sends it to the addressee—a practice certainly not conducive to accuracy."

But of what use will the telautograph be to us? It was hardly worth while to invent a telautograph for the Chinese, especially as they are so slow to take up ordinary telegraphy, and even yet have not seriously begun to look at railways.

Well, the telautograph may have—like a British colony—a great future before

it. To give precedence to the Sovereign—just consider what a vast convenience the apparatus may be in the machinery of Government. The Queen's signature is constantly being needed to legalise Acts of Parliament, to fill official appointments, and the like. Sometimes when an emergency arises, public business may be delayed for two or three days, while a messenger races up to Balmoral, or over to the Riviera, to obtain the indispensable sign-manual of the Sovereign. How much simpler it would be if the Queen always travelled with a telautograph, as well as with a telegraphist, in her suite! The Minister in Attendance could then be warned to have everything in readiness. An official in Downing Street could read over the State paper by telephone to Her Majesty, who then, by the telautograph, could affix her signature in the Premier's private room without moving out of her boudoir on Deeside or in Florence.

In practical business the telautograph should be of great utility, for although the telephone has done much to facilitate commercial operations, few business-men are content with a bargain as conducted through that instrument. The defect—perhaps also the virtue, when we come to think of the terrible potentiality of the phonograph, which may preserve one's spoken words to hurl at one's devoted head at any time—of the telephone is that it leaves no record. Now, by the telautograph any number of contracts may be safely signed, sealed, and—no, not delivered, but registered for reference and as evidence.

A principal's orders to his subordinates can no longer be misunderstood—as they so frequently are when bawled over the telephone from house or club to office—if they are transmitted in his own writing. Brokers and clients need no longer squabble over quotations and orders, when the figures can be telautographically transmitted so that he who runs may read. The much-needed cheque can no longer be withheld because the hand that alone can sign it is distant; a telautogram will settle the matter in ten seconds. Treaties of peace and declarations of war can alike be ratified and advertised by this new process of electric communication.

But, more than this, portraits and sketches can be flashed from hemisphere to hemisphere in a few shakes of the silken cords. The photograph of an absconding company-swindler can be flashed to South

America long before the vessel carrying him has crossed the Line. The counterfeit presentment of a missing heir can be "wired" simultaneously to every quarter of the globe, so that it will soon be impossible to lose oneself. The next war correspondents, or rather the correspondents in the next war, will be able to send plans of campaign and pictures of the battles they describe, as they describe them. With the telautograph in full working order the "Daily Illustrated" is the newspaper of the future.

It is not a dream. We are informed that, in the United States, Telautograph Exchanges are already being established in the principal cities, and that the cost of the service will be lower than the average telephone charges.

### A DAY AS A HOP-PICKER.

FEW scenes lend themselves so readily to the artist in search of the picturesque as a hop-garden in process of stripping. It is so notorious that most of us are prone to forget that the hop-picker's life is far from being an idyllic one. We see these lively groups prettily framed by the tall hop-vines, with their green and gold, and with, it is to be hoped, the blue sky over all. Even rage and dirt and wrinkles get more or less sublimated under these influences. The singing of the girls among the pickers, and the antics of the unemployed children as they race about amid the vines and the cradles, or roll in the stripped refuse of the hop-yard, all operate strongly and with a certain illusiveness upon the imagination.

There is, however, of course, a vigorous reverse to the medal. The person who doubts it may be recommended to try the life for a day and a night. He must not shirk the night. There will be every temptation to do so if he has been accustomed to refinement and comfort, even in but the positive degree. Yet it is just these hours between the working hours of the picker's life which give the true tone of the circumstances of this motley throng, gathered here in the country for two or three weeks of beautiful September.

When I mentioned to the farmer my desire to pick hops as a fellow labourer with the accredited hands, and to hard with the others for the livelong day and night, he smiled. Yet I was allowed to have my own way—up to midnight. Then

I yielded to his arguments. The sight of these hundreds of men and women, boys, girls, and children, lying together in the straw, with the canvas blankets drawn half over their bodies, was not alluring. A drunken man was slobbering in his sleep in one place; here and there were restless children tossing to and fro; the women, dirty and bedraggled, looked—poor creatures!—quite as repellent as the rest of the company. They had the barns and other outbuildings for their bed-chambers. Three of these let immediately upon a great cow-yard, well furnished with the usual odoriferous litter of such places. The pig-styes were hard by. It was by no means an inviting series of lodging-houses. Still, the chief deterrent of all had to be mentioned ere I was persuaded not to crawl into their midst and insinuate myself among them as a bed-fellow. As might have been expected, the places teemed with vermin of two or three kinds. The vermin frightened me, and I gave way. Instead of the stables I slept in the haunted room of the farmhouse, in an old oaken bedstead with a pedigree about half a millennium long. For my cowardice I deserved to be visited by the family ghost. Indeed, I lay awake for hours listening to the wailing of the wind and the striking of the various clocks of the house; and so gave the ghost every chance. But it did not come, and when I went downstairs in the morning, I had to plead disbelief in a matter about which incredulity was held to be almost impertinent.

Still, up to a certain point, I played the part of picker fairly well. I journeyed to my friend's farm in company with about fifty other pickers, and at a fare and a quarter the return ticket. Externally, I don't suppose I looked different from the rest, for I had made myself up as a broken-down tramp, and, to befit the disguise, had not shaved for three days. I did not, however, deceive them all. One old woman who confessed that this was her thirtieth season as a picker, put me to cross-examination with great success, and forced me at her tongue's point to conciliate her with some tobacco, which she straightway put in her clay pipe and smoked while waiting for the train. Later I fell in rather better with the humour of the men pickers. I quite agreed, for example, with the forcible asseveration of a brawny fellow, that it was a mean sort of labour for an able-bodied person of the male sex. "It's woman's work and woman's pay," he

said. When he added, with some acrimony, "But what's a chap to do if he can't get anything better?" I, too, shrugged my shoulders, looked discontented to the core, and growled back a sturdy: "Ay, what, indeed, mate? That's where the shoe pinches, I'll be hanged if it ain't."

The porter had some trouble to get us all into the special carriages—of the oldest kind—set aside for us. He used strong language about us; and, in answer to the sympathetic comment of a bystander well-to-do in the world, volunteered these further words: "They're brutes, that's what they are. I'd rather have to do with pigs than with them." I am bound to say his speech irritated me. But though I gave him the opportunity I could not catch his eye; nor in all probability would he have been withered by the expression of scorn and contempt I had summoned up for the purpose.

We were not a miserable community, by any means. The weather was fine and bright, and the beauty of the heathery knolls, and the green dales with sparkling little trout brooks in their midst—as seen from the train—was balm to a depressed spirit. My friends wondered openly whether the hops were fine and large this year, whether the farmer would be as free with his cider as he had been before, and much more to the same purpose. About one thing they were very positive: they would not pick more than six bushels for a shilling, and if the hops ran small, they would strike rather than pick more than five. I asked a pale, clean-faced young woman who sat next to me and made use of my knees for sundry of her bundles, how many bushels a fellow might expect to pick in a day. When I rejoined that it was my first experience, she said I should do well to pick eight or nine. "And they'll crib you, too, master," she added, "if you let on as you're new at it." I did not quite know what she meant by that. But she soon explained. "I've seen 'em crib girls, and toss and maul 'em till they lost their tempers bad; but there's some as they durstn't touch." Then I understood. I decided, therefore, to become ferocious if need were; for I had not the least desire to be tossed in a blanket of sacking at my time of life by such very rough executioners.

At our destination we were met by two portly waggons from the farm, and thus we were conveyed to the hop-fields, in



which already a number of hands were at work. The surroundings were extremely winsome. The farm itself occupied land contiguous to the Teme, that famous jade-coloured stream of grayling, and on both banks of the valley the hills rose high towards the clear heavens, with a line of dark green woods on the farther side. My friends grew animated. They insisted on stopping at a public-house by the way, and drinking a good deal of ale. But there were some of us in such a state of destitution that even the trifling cost of a glass of country beer was too much to be incurred. These were anxious to get to work without delay. Not for them were the provision carts which patrolled up and down the high-road adjacent to the fields being picked. Bread and bloaters were the viands most in demand, and next in popularity was cheap bacon.

We were soon taken in hand by the farmer and his adjutants. The good gentleman drew me aside and protested that I need not act the part with such earnestness. But when I persisted I was mated to a couple of hearty women with whom I was to work in common. They did not seem to fancy me as a companion when they saw the rate at which I picked. But I touched their womanly hearts by hinting at a recent illness which might be one cause of my unremunerative tardiness. And later in the day, I entirely won their good opinion by declining to take my share of the money for the bushels of our crib at twopence the statute bushel.

As I have said, the weather was fine. This made all the difference for us. If it had rained cats and dogs, still we should have picked. It would have been completely miserable to stand about in the stiff soil of the hop-yard—hops are a very exhausting crop—being slowly saturated to the bone. But there would have been no help for it.

While I worked I looked about me, though paying due attention at the same time to the incessant chatter of my two crib-mates. It was pretty to see the small children rolling among the stripped vines, or playing at hide and seek up and down the untouched rows. For them, at any rate, the change from the slums of a town could hardly fail to be beneficial. But their brothers and sisters a year or two their seniors were not equally fortunate. If they could get their heads over the cradles or cribs into which the hop-grapes were being stripped, they were impounded

for work—and hard work, moreover—all through the day. For an hour or two they found it tolerable. Then they showed signs of weariness, and late in the afternoon it was pitiable to see them, crying and drowsy, and constantly wailing to their obdurate parents about their overmastering fatigue.

Throughout the hop-yard there was far more vivacity among the women pickers than among the men. My two friends were never at a loss for conversation. One of them told me how years back she had been wont to pick by candlelight, with the stumps of the dips fixed in the sides of the crib, and how the owls had hooted in the adjacent woods ere they had got through their day's work. It is possible in those days the supply of labour for the farmers was at hopping-time often much less than the demand. Hence the night work. The pickers then must have made handsome earnings. Even as it was, my friend confessed to having put seventeen bushels to her credit, at twopence the bushel, the day before my arrival. As country pay goes, this is not amiss for a woman's wage.

Perhaps it was this sense of their superiority under the present circumstances that made the women so decidedly self-assertive in the hop-field. As a rule, the men worked silently and without enthusiasm. But the girls sang and chaffed the farmer and his regular assistants, and altogether showed that they were contented with their surroundings. And if now and then they made excited forays among the little children, where there was more crying than laughter or sleep, their hands were not as hard as their tongues. It was certainly enough to humiliate a man to realise that, work as fast as he could, his earnings were unlikely to reach one shilling and ninepence or two shillings in the twelve hours. And so they did not seem to think so well of things in general as the women folk.

Now and again the farmer came down upon us with his keen eyes and ready speech. "Pick them clean! pick them clean!" he cried, and was greeted by a prompt "Ay, ay, master," from several cribs at once. The pickers stood in no awe of him. Not a bit of it. For instance, a pale slip of a girl on one occasion called him to the crib at which she and her mother were working, and there and then gave him a good rating for setting them to work near a row the hops of which were only half as big as most of the others. "It

ain't fair, master," she exclaimed, and "No, it beain't fair, for sure," exclaimed the older woman. There was certainly much sense in the plea of these two pickers. I had not worked for an hour ere I found myself instinctively rejecting the small and slightly mildewed hops for the vines with large rustling grape clusters upon them, which I could strip with ease by a brisk movement of forefinger and thumb. The farmer, too, acknowledged their grievance, for he allowed their crib to be moved to a better part in the yard, and set a trio of newcomers, two tramps and a gipsy, in their place.

Periodically, too, the measurers came by with their helpers carrying bushel baskets and sacks. These men had registers in which they recorded the number of bushels which stood to the credit of the cribs individually. They measured the grapes from the full cribs, pressing them tight enough to cause many a groan of dissatisfaction, objected to the number of leaves left with the hops, and finally passed the contents of the cribs into the sacks, which were briskly thrown upon the waggon near at hand, and without loss of time carried off to the kilns.

When I had worked for three hours, and begun to excite the admiration of my partners, I pleaded momentary fatigue, and at a signal from the farmer went up with him to see what was taking place in the kilns. Every one knows the singular chimney cowl of the hop-farm. These are so designed that while letting out the vapour from the drying hops, they also keep out rain. The hops are shed into the upper chamber of the kiln and there stewed, so to speak, in the dry heat for ten or twelve hours. The fires below are designed to maintain a regular temperature of about a hundred degrees. At the end of the twelve hours the now marketable hops are quickly removed and pressed into the pockets by a machine-worked piston. That done and the pocket stitched, the hop is ready for the buyer, and the sooner he buys it the fresher its aroma is likely to be, and therefore the more serviceable it is.

For its simplicity the business of hop-growing quite takes the fancy. Of course, there must be excellent land in the first place, and its richness must be maintained by constant manuring. That being granted, and a capital of about thirty pound an acre being presupposed in the grower, with ordinary care and meteorological

civility, the farmer ought to have a substantial sum in the bank after his harvest. The processes of pruning and banking—"hilling," it is technically termed—the plants, and tying them to the poles or yarn up which they are to climb, are the main work of the spring. Weeding is also very essential. Blight and mould, too, have to be fought; the "aphis humuli" being a very serious foe to the bine's welfare, and mould being frequently altogether destructive. These various labours and precautions being assumed, however, hop-growing is remunerative. There is no comparison between its profits and those of wheat-growing. Though as speculative in individual seasons as an investment at Monte Carlo, the average comes out satisfactorily.

From the kilns my friend took me into the dormitories for his three or four hundred hands. They did not charm me. The straw, which was spread over the bricked floor, was no doubt clean a week ago when the hopping began, but it looked far from inviting after a week's use. There were some invalids to be seen. A little boy was discovered sitting on the dung-heap in the middle of the yard nursing a sick baby, which looked as if its tenure of mortal life was feeble. Another boy was lying on the straw with a broken arm, which had been set by a medical student who happened to be staying at the farm. There was also a woman with a newly-born child. The latter had a nook quite to themselves, and mother and child seemed to be doing well. It is no uncommon thing for children to be born during the hop-picking, and though it is inconvenient for the farmer, or, rather, the farmer's wife, every care is taken of the invalids.

We returned to the hop-yard, this time accompanied by a barrel of cider, of which the pickers took full advantage. Certain rather lazy souls—men and women—who had gone into the high-road to smoke their pipes and lounge, returned to work when they smelt the cider. To my palate it was rather rough, but no doubt it was the better for being so. Some of the children who were exceedingly eager to quench their thirst with the fluid made wry faces when it was in their mouths. Certain of the men, too, did not conceal their opinion that the master would have done a deal better to have given them some harvest ale instead.

For the remaining hours of the working

day I toiled in a desultory manner, going from crib to crib and picking where I pleased. Naturally there was no objection to my doing so, since my labours profited—slightly—those whom I helped. But there was not a little curiosity about me—my battered hat; old neckcloth; short, broken-kneed trousers; and large, gaping boots, somehow appearing inconsistent with my generosity as a picker. Thus I saw a good deal of my friends the hoppers. There is no denying they were an extremely rough lot. Their speech was about as bad as it could be. Its impropriety was illimitable: and the young and old of both sexes seemed alike in the matter. But one could hardly presume to blame them for a defect that was no doubt inherited and largely due to their circumstances. One thing struck me; that was the number of pretty faces among the girl workers. Some of them were more than pretty. But they spoiled all when they opened their mouths. To be sure, their teeth might be white and even enough; but their tongues were not.

So the day fell to evening. The sun set beautifully in the west of the Teme Valley. Even in the gloaming there were workers; but by eight o'clock the hop-yards were deserted. The neighbourhood of the farm was now like a camp. Great was the demand in the kitchen for warm water for tea-making. On all sides the pickers were washing the hop-oil from their fingers and preparing for the evening meal. At ten o'clock their groupings were exceedingly picturesque under the starlight, with the play of the bonfires upon their countenances. Eleven o'clock found a number of them still about. Certain revellers who had been to the village and its public-house returned noisily, and cast themselves upon their straw beds with but scant regard for their neighbours. Certain of the women were noisy and intractable. But by midnight the stables were fully tenanted, our last patrol showed us the pickers fast wrapped in the sleep they had so well earned, and we too felt that we could retire with a fair sense of irresponsibility.

### THE WEALDEN IRONWORKS.

THE history of the ironworks of Kent and Sussex, their origin, growth, and decline, is well worthy attention. From the maps of the Wealden district, published by the Geological Survey, we learn that, resting on rocks

of marine origin, is an extensive series of clays, sands, and limestones, twelve hundred feet thick, deposited in what is supposed to be the ancient estuary of a river which drained a continent now submerged by the Atlantic Ocean. About the middle of these is a layer of what has been called "the Wadhurst Clay," which furnished two belts of ironstone from one to two feet thick. In these broken layers or nodules, embedded in clay, were found fragments of bone or wood, and masses of shells, supposed to belong to a period before the earth became a human habitation. There are evidences of some great convulsion by which what may have been regular layers have been broken into every conceivable shape. The ironstone is now found scattered about in patches throughout the entire Wealden area, from Tonbridge to Hastings, and from Horsham to Winchelsea.

The ironstone must have been worked at a very early date; at least before the Roman Conquest, as Cæsar states that the Britons of the maritime parts opposite Gaul worked the iron; and as no iron has been found along the east coast south of Yorkshire, the reference must be made to the Weald.

In very many parts of the Weald there are numerous circular or oval depressions from three to six feet wide, which are the remains of the old shafts. These "mine-pits," as they are called by the country folk, are from six to eight feet deep, having been so far filled up when the ironstone below had been exhausted. These pits are found in groups, and are generally overgrown with trees, as the broken character of the surface has prohibited cultivation. The plan of working seems to have been—unlike that of the Romans in the Forest of Dean, where, the whole region being hilly, they made tunnels into the hills—to sink a shaft down to the ironstone, get out as much ore as possible, then fill up the shaft and sink another, and so on.

Other traces of the old works are seen in the large accumulations of scoræ, now hidden from the casual observer by an overgrowth of ferns, mosses, and other natural products of the soil. These heaps are found near the old furnaces, and in the embankments of the old "hammer ponds," stretching across the valleys, and damming the stream until it acquired power to drive the hammer at the forges.

If, according to the statement of Julius Cæsar, the ironstone was worked by the ancient Keltic inhabitants before the Roman invasion, the origin of these workings must date before the Christian era, little if any less than twenty centuries ago. That the Romans worked the iron in the Wealden district is evidenced by the numerous remains of Roman art in the cinder-heaps. In 1844, Samian ware (urns and other vessels made of clay in the Island of Samos) and bronze implements were found in a mass of scoriæ, covering an area of from six to seven acres, in the parish of Maresfield. Among other interesting objects were coins of Nero (A.D. 64 and 68); Vespasian (69 and 79); Tetricus (274); Diocletian (284-6). Thus it would appear that the workings must have been continued at least for several generations. And it would have been strange if the enterprising people who worked the tin and copper mines of Cornwall, who obtained lead and zinc in Somerset, who extracted gold from the quartz rocks of Wales, and who laid the Forest of Dean under contribution for iron, should have neglected the extensive resources of the Weald.

In all probability the ironworks of the Weald were carried on until the time of the Saxon invasion in the fifth century. Indeed, the Weald itself was free from the incursions of the Saxons until A.D. 477, twenty years after the kingdom of Kent was founded; though, no doubt, many of the Wealden ironworkers forsook their forges to fight against the common enemy.

The ruthless destruction by the Saxons of everything Roman had the effect of gradually but surely putting an end to the iron trade of the Weald, and until A.D. 1266 there is no mention of ironworks in the Wealden district. In that year Henry the Third granted to the town of Lewes a toll of one penny on every cart laden with iron which entered the town. Subsequently many curious entries may be found. In A.D. 1300, the ironmongers of London complained to the Lord Mayor that the smiths of the Weald brought in irons for wheels that were shorter than they ought to be, to the loss of the whole trade. In connection with the ill-fated expedition of Edward the Second in 1321 against Bruce of Scotland, three thousand horse-shoes and twenty-nine thousand nails were provided by Peter de Waltham, Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex. In the same century occurred

the first recorded use of iron for monumental purposes, a tombstone being set up in the village churchyard of Burwash, Sussex. This started a fashion which was much followed in the Weald. Andirons, still to be seen in some old farmhouse kitchens, and even parlours, became an article of Wealden manufacture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

An incidental allusion which shows the importance of the iron trade in the Weald at that time, may be found in "Foxe's Book of Martyrs." Richard Woodman was one of ten men and women burnt for alleged heresy in 1557 at Lewis. Woodman was an ironmaster at Warbleton. In one of his examinations before the Bishop of Winchester he says: "Let me go home, I pray you, to my wife and children, to see them kept, and other poor folk that I would set aworke. By the help of God, I have set aworke a hundreth persons ere this all the year together."

About the middle of the sixteenth century another branch of the iron trade sprang up, of great national importance, namely, the casting of cannon. In this the ironmasters of the Weald stood first in the kingdom. The first cannon cast in England was made at Buxted, a village two miles from Uckfield. This was in 1543, and it has been considered a matter of such interest that the names of the ironmaster and the actual founder have been handed down. Ralph Hogge was the ironmaster, and one Huggett was the founder, and some local versifier has thus commemorated the names of the manufacturers and the event:

Master Huggett and his man John,  
They did cast the first cannon.

The first mortar was also made in the Weald, at Edridge Green. It consisted of small bars of wrought iron bound together by hoops, with a polygonous chamber of one solid piece. In a few years there was a brisk trade in heavy ordnance, and a license was granted by the Lord High Admiral in 1572, permitting the exportation of cannon. This, however, was revoked in the autumn of the same year. During the next fifteen years, notwithstanding the revocation of the license, the exportation of cannon continued, when, in 1587, the Earl of Warwick made an agreement with the gun-founders that a certain quantity of cannon should be cast every year for the Government, and that the work should be distributed equally among

them; they, on their part, undertaking that no ordnance should be sold except in London, and to such merchants "as my lord or his deputy should name."

There is little doubt that many a shot fired at the Spanish ships of the Armada was from guns cast in the Weald. Indeed, Drake, Hawkins, Richard Grenville, and other British captains had given proof enough to the Spaniards of the quality of British cannon as well as British seamen. Count Gondomar, therefore, the Spanish Ambassador in London, begged of James the First the liberty of exporting them.

In the seventeenth century the trade reached its most prosperous stage; and so important were the ironworks considered that in the Civil War all the works belonging to the Crown or to Royalists were destroyed.

Peace restored, the iron trade of the Weald still flourished. Not only was the manufacture of guns carried on, but other branches were in active working: church bells, tombstones, grates, and iron railings were largely produced. The balustrades now standing around St. Paul's Cathedral were made at the Lambethurst furnace. It is said the contractor ruined himself, though the cost of the balustrades was no less than eleven thousand two hundred and two pounds, a sum representing four or six times the amount in these days. The trade continued to flourish up to the end of the seventeenth century, and even two or three decades later it was considered the chief manufacturing interest of the Weald.

But soon a difficulty presented itself and made its force seriously known. It had been foreseen, and many legal enactments had been framed to prevent or provide against it. This was no other than the scarcity of fuel for smelting the iron. As early as 1543, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, a law was passed that no wood should be turned into pasture; and in 1581, when Elizabeth was on the throne, in consequence of the "late erection of sundry iron mills in divers places," and the destruction of timber thereupon ensuing, it was made illegal to convert into charcoal any wood within twenty-two miles of London, or near any harbour or navigable river. The destruction of the forests still proceeded, notwithstanding, so that another Act was passed in 1585, forbidding the erection of ironworks other than on ancient sites. Twenty or thirty years later, when the large consumption of timber still went on, the poet

Drayton bewailed the fact in quaint verse:

These forests, as I say, the daughters of the Weald,  
That in their heavy breasts had long their griefs  
concealed,  
Foreseeing their decay each hour so fast come on  
Under the axe's stroke, fetched many a grievous  
groan,  
When at the anvil's weight and hammer's dreadful  
sound,  
Echoed the hollow woods, and shook the queasy  
ground.

The growing scarcity of large timber was again and again brought under the notice of the Government, and laws were made to restrain its lavish use, but to little purpose. At length what Acts of Parliament could not effect was gradually accomplished by another law which could not be broken. The large timber-trees had disappeared by degrees, and the growing scarcity of wood raised the price of charcoal so considerably that the ironworks were no longer a paying concern. Some of the masters closed their works, others migrated to South Wales, where coal was abundant, and laid the foundation in Aberdare and Merthyr Tydvil of the vast industry which employs its tens of thousands of busy workers and ships its produce to all parts of the world.

The decline of the iron trade in the Weald went forward until, in 1740, the furnaces were reduced to ten, in 1788 to two, and in 1796 to one, which was at Ashburnham, in Sussex, near Battle. In the last-named year the Ashburnham forge furnished a hundred and seventy-three tons of iron; and in 1825 that also became silent, and the iron mines of the Weald, first worked by the Kelts at least eighteen centuries before, were finally abandoned. The black forges crumbled away, and the heaps of refuse have long since been taken possession of by green moss and rank grass, with a growth of blackthorn, hazel, ash, and alder. Some of the old furnace ponds still remain, as at Horamonden, and the site of others is traceable by the mounds of earth running across the valley. The names of certain places, too, are a kind of epitaph over the grave of this departed industry, which will probably never know a resurrection. But there are prophets who predict another future.

The discovery of iron ore near the coal-fields of South Wales, in Staffordshire, Shropshire, and Yorkshire, did much to divert the iron trade to those districts, but the discovery of coal in Kent, if it can be profitably worked, may in time bring back

some of the iron trade to the Weald; for the iron is there, as the deposits in countless runlets by the roadside and elsewhere abundantly testify.

## HONOURABLE INTENTIONS.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

HIS name was Jim Hitchens, and he was a carpenter "to his trade." Her name was Melia, and she was old Binks's daughter, and the neat little brass plate affixed to the door of her modest abode bore the inscription, "Miss Binks, dressmaker," a fact which was further insisted upon by the exhibition of a fly-spotted fashion-plate of the season before last in the top left-hand pane of the window belonging to the best parlour.

Had you pursued your enquiries among the lady's numerous friends and acquaintances you would, moreover, have had it impressed upon you that Miss Binks was a very genteel young woman, and that, in aspiring to keep company with her, Jim Hitchens was considered to be decidedly "bettering" himself. Keeping company being, it should be observed, a sort of intermediary process, something between mere ordinary acquaintanceship and that more definite and satisfactory condition which is assumed only on being actually invited to "name the day." So long as you are only "keeping company," it is always possible and even allowable for the chief contracting party to execute a retrograde motion, under the excuse that his attentions being, after all, only such as might be classed under the head of general investigations, the result of which not being entirely satisfactory, he has decided to try elsewhere.

Consequently, when I repeat that Jim Hitchens and Miss Binks were keeping company, I do not wish to imply that they were by any means arrived at that blissful condition which, in a higher walk of life, is known as "being engaged."

Oh dear, no! Matters were not nearly so far advanced as that, though it was possible that, with time and care, they might reach such a point. For matrimony is not a result that is best attained by hurry and flurry, and, after all, at the period to which I refer Jim Hitchens had not been keeping company with Miss Binks for more than fifteen years at a stretch, and those people who insisted on reckoning the time as twenty-five did not really know the ins and outs of the affair half so well as they pre-

tended; the additional ten years which they thus indiscriminately tacked on to the period of probation having merely been passed in a species of light skirmishing, and entirely without prejudice.

Still, the decade thus occupied was not thrown away, inasmuch as during that time Jim Hitchens's ideas on the subject of keeping company had opportunity to crystallise, and his attentions towards Miss Binks became so marked during the next five or six years that people began to talk, and it became a matter of history that "Jim 'Itchens, he were keepin' comp'ny along o' Miss Binks, that he were." Some folks, desirous of earning a reputation for preternatural acuteness, even venturing so far as to make the assertion that "they had seed it comin'."

However, there was no cause for undue haste, the affair being still only in its infancy; though Miss Binks herself, even as far back as that, had been younger, and Jim Hitchens had a bald patch on his crown which naturally would not decrease with the progress of time.

And so they kept company.

Every Sunday afternoon, at half-past three, Jim, in all the unaccustomed glory of a clean shave and his Sunday suit—you could tell his Sunday suit at the end of the street by the creases in it—called for Miss Binks, and they made a solemn progress "down street" or "up street," as inclination or the force of circumstances directed.

There was not a great deal of conversation indulged in, because in order to converse brilliantly it is, if not necessary, at least advisable to have some topic on which to express opinions; consequently, as Miss Binks had no opinions outside her own business, and always talked most freely with a row of pins between her teeth, and Jim Hitchens was equally circumscribed in his ideas, not many words passed between them on these occasions. Indeed, they were mostly occupied in exchanging polite salutations with their mutual acquaintances, such as:

"Arternoon, Miss Binks! Arternoon, Mr. 'Itchens! Seasonable weather for the time o' year! Crops is lookin' fairish," and the like.

The walk over, Jim Hitchens escorted Miss Binks back to her own door, where the same little ceremony was invariably observed.

Just as the gentleman was on the point of taking his departure, the lady would be apparently struck by an original idea.

"I s'pose you wouldn't come in and take a cup o' tea along of father and me!" she would enquire, with modest diffidence.

This unexpected invitation, though repeated Sunday after Sunday as the years rolled by, never failed to take Mr. Hitchens entirely by surprise.

"Well," rubbing his left whisker, "I dunno; but o' course, if you puts it that way, Miss Binks, why——"

Then she would open the door, and he would follow her meekly into a little room where a little old man would be dozing peacefully in an elbow-chair with a blue cotton handkerchief, spotted with white, over his head, while a big black kettle would be having an argument with the clock in the corner as to whether it was not time to get tea.

"Tick-tick-tick," went the clock, in its old dark wooden case, "I'm five minutes to five, and I'm not going to hurry for anybody."

"Puff-puff," from the kettle. "Do you suppose I don't know the proper time for tea after all these years, and I tell you you're slow, slow, slow."

Then the kettle would catch sight of the couple who were keeping company, and give a loud chuckle, and boil over for the sake of having the last word.

Miss Binks would take off the kettle, and then, turning to the little old man, bend down and shout in his ear:

"Fa-ather! Here's Mr. 'Tchens come to take tea along of you."

Whereupon her little old parent would whisk the blue cotton handkerchief off his head, and betray vast astonishment at the sight of the visitor.

"Lor', now, to think o' that—Mis-ter 'Tchens! Well, bless me, this is a surprise!"

After tea, Jim invariably escorted Miss Binks to chapel, and sat beside her in the gallery. His words on parting from her at the door—for matters were not advanced to that state that he could expect to be asked to supper, supper being a more confidential and compromising meal than tea—would generally be something in this style:

"I dunno', Miss Binks, whether you'd be thinkin' o' takin' a walk next Sunday if the weather 'olds up?"

Here he would take a step back and give a comprehensive glance at the sky.

"I shouldn't be s'prised myself if we was to have rain 'twixt now and then.

But if not, s'pose we was to say 'bout three or ha'-past!"

To which Miss Binks would reply with maidenly hesitation:

"—Well, I 'ardly know what to say about it, Mr. 'Tchens. You see it depends upon father, he's gettin' on and—well, if you care to walk down this way it don't take me long to put on my bonnet——"

By this and the foregoing examples it will be seen that the interesting pair had not yet arrived at that degree of intimacy as would warrant the use of Christian names. It was possible that Jim occasionally mused upon a future when the unbending laws of local etiquette would allow him to salute Miss Binks as "Melia," but that time was not yet. While to Miss Binks herself the idea of addressing her ascribed swain to his face as "Jim," until the day had been actually fixed beyond recall, would have savoured of rank impropriety. And so the years went by—two, four, six, ten, twelve—and affairs still remained in statu quo. Miss Binks continued to proffer her weekly invitation, which Jim Hitchens always accepted with the same appearance of hesitancy, and so made a third at the Sunday tea-table to old Binks's invariably expressed surprise, while the clock ticked away and the kettle boiled over with unfailing regularity.

After a while, however, even the two last, though their mechanism and construction was less susceptible to outward influences than that of mere human nature, became conscious of the passage of time. The clock, for instance, knew that he wheezed more than ever, and that his striking apparatus was no longer to be thoroughly depended on; and even the kettle was aware that there was something wrong with his spout, and a new lid would be an absolute necessity before long if he wished to keep up his position.

"Tick, tick," went the clock one day; "I've lost three minutes and a half since dinner, and it doesn't do to depend on me too much if you want to catch a train or be in time for chapel. No, I'm not the clock I was in 'Melia's grandfather's time, and it's no use pretending that I am."

"Puff, puff," from the kettle. "I don't know whether you've noticed how the coals keep spluttering! The fact is—though this is in confidence—that I leak just a little, and it strikes me very forcibly that before long I shall want a new bottom, to say nothing of other minor repairs."

"If that is the case with us," ticked the clock, "what must it be with those poor creatures who depend upon us for so much? D'you know it has struck me for some time past that 'Melia'—yes, he called her 'Melia, but then he had known her longer than Jim Hitchens—" 'isn't the girl she used to be. I remember the time when I looked upon her as a bouncer—oh, yes, decidedly as a bouncer, but she don't seem to have much bounce left in her now."

"And then there's Jim Hitchens," puffed the kettle—you see he also called him by his Christian name in the most familiar manner possible—"have you observed the bald spot on the top of his head? When he first took to coming you hardly noticed it unless you stood on the hob. But now it has got bigger and bigger until, if it goes on growing much more, he won't be able to cover it with his hat."

"Ah, well," wheezed the clock, "I suppose he's wearing out like the rest of us. We're all growing old together—and yet, after all, 'Melia' can't be any age. What's forty-eight or fifty when you come to think of it? What's Binks himself but a mere boy compared with me?"

Speaking of old Binks reminds one that if he was "old Binks" at the commencement of the story, he was naturally still older Binks by this time, though he merely seemed to betray his advancement by becoming smaller and more shrivelled—like a well-seasoned pippin that was sound at the core in spite of its corrugated rind.

One day, however, a year or two after the conversation just recorded had taken place, old Binks woke up from his afternoon nap, and drawing aside the blue veil of mystery in which he was wont to enshroud his wrinkled countenance during these periods of somnolency, made the following remarkable assertion:

"'Melia, my gal," regarding his daughter, as she brought all the resources of her art to bear upon a dress she was turning for the butcher's wife at the corner, "'Melia, my gal," he piped, like an ancient bullfinch, "you're a-gettin' on, ain't you?"

Miss Binks, with her mind engrossed by the subject of box pleats, to say nothing of having made a temporary pincushion of her mouth, refused, under these circumstances, to commit herself to anything beyond a monosyllabic grunt.

But old Binks had not done yet, for, after a minute or two, he suddenly remarked:

"That young man o' yours, 'Melia, he's

been comin' 'ere gettin' on fur some time now!"

Again Miss Binks assented or dissented, for the sound was non-committal, and wondered what "father" was driving at; a question which he himself at once proceeded to answer for her.

"I s'pose, 'Melia, he ain't begun to say nothin' to you 'bout 'is hintentions yet awhile?"

"No," snapped Miss Binks, taking a row or two of pins out of her mouth and stabbing a refractory box pleat in its most vulnerable part, "not yet, he ain't."

There was silence, during which the kettle, in great excitement, broke into a gallop.

"'Pears to me, 'Melia," continued her parent, who had apparently been thinking hard before he again spoke, "that it's time as somethin' were said by one or t'other. I courted your mother fowtreen year and three month, and though I don't go so far as to say I 'olds wi' short courtships as a rule, still I niver 'ad no reason to repent, though they do say, marry in 'aste and repent at lee-shure. 'P'raps you'd like me to speak to Jim, friendly like, and put it to 'im? Not as ther's no need fur 'urry, but somethin' might be said defnit' as to the year arter next, or if that were considered too soon, the one arter that, fur though I doesn't 'old wi' 'urryin' things on, neither, 'Melia, my gal, does I 'old wi' shillyshallyin'."

Here the clock began to strike four, but, seeing that it still wanted ten minutes to the hour, thought better of it.

Miss Binks, before replying to her parent's proposition, bit off a thread, and seemed to be turning the matter over in her mind and weighing its pros and cons. Then, with merely some half-dozen pins in her mouth, she "up" and spoke, and her words were the words of wisdom.

"Well, father, I won't go for to deny as I 'aven't thought as Jim 'Itchens were a bit over back'ard in comin' forrard, and I know the neighbours do talk, so p'raps if you could give 'im an 'int it might 'elp 'im to know 'is own mind, which he don't seem to do not at presint, and if it don't do no good I don't see as it could do much 'arm."

Here the clock, also giving way to excitement, struck eleven without stopping to take breath.

"Mind you," continued Miss Binks, as soon as the clock had done speaking, and pointing at her father with her needle, "I



don't want for you to be 'ard on 'im, only jest to find out what 'is hintentions is, or whether he's got any or's likely to 'ave." Then her mind reverting to the job on which she was employed, she added enigmatically: "I don't know after all as I won't 'ave gathers—box pleats is tryin' to a stout figger."

So one morning old Binks put on his hat—or rather his daughter put it on for him, jamming his head well home—and took his stick and toddled off "down street," charged with the delicate mission of plumbng the unknown depths of Jim Hitchens's matrimonial inclinations.

What transpired in the course of this momentous interview has never been divulged. Possibly old Binks himself might have been to blame in that he failed to bring to bear upon the matter that delicaty and tact for which it pre-eminently called. At any rate, when he returned home it was plain that the little old man had been considerably "put about." This at once made itself evident to his daughter, who met him at the door, and, taking from him his hat and stick, enquired, in a voice in which not even the presence of pins between her lips could disguise the signs of interest amounting almost to eagerness:

"Well, father?"

"Not at all, 'Melia, not at all," was the tremulous reply. "I should say anythin' but sich!"

"Lor, father!" exclaimed Miss Binks, with an attempt to quell her rising agitation by placing her hand on her heart—an attempt that was balked by a rampart of her favourite implements, of extra large size. "Lor, father!" She could say no more, but, laying violent hands on her parent's coat-collar, she bore him across the flagged passage into the front room, where, depositing him in his elbow-chair, she mounted guard over him. "Now, father, speak your mind."

Thus adjured, the little old man observed in a tone in which parental indignation struggled with shortness of breath:

"'Melia, my gal, it's my belief as he's bin makin' a fool o' you. Leastways, all as I could get out of 'im when I puts it to 'im straight, was as he weren't prepared to go to sich lengths as to menshin any particular date, as he couldn't abide bein' 'urried, nor yet drove—drove was 'is very words, 'Melia—as he niver see no good come of it. All as he could and would say was as he'd be round as usual come Sunday."

"Father," cried Miss Binks, in a voice choked by emotion and pins, "jest you leave 'im to me!"

"I will, 'Melia, my gal, I will," answered her parent unhesitatingly, "fur I've ivery confidence in you, but what I says is, bring 'im up short."

Sunday came; so did Jim Hitchens. He had been a sandy-coloured man originally, but had worn drab, was slightly knock-kneed, with a general appearance of having been put together at odd times, the result being one not entirely satisfactory, and Miss Binks, as she observed him surreptitiously from her bedroom window, came to the conclusion that she had been nearly on the point of throwing herself away.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hitchens, unaware that he was undergoing inspection, leant against the fence and chewed a twig, wondering at the unusual time taken by his lady-love in putting on her bonnet. Scarcely ever before, in all the long years during which they had kept company, had she failed to be ready and waiting.

He turned and looked up at the window, but Miss Binks was too quick for him, and dodged behind the curtain. Once the idea of going boldly up to the door and making enquiries presented itself to him, but the idea, being altogether too venturesome, and entirely without parallel in the annals of his courtship, was abandoned as soon as formed.

Then the church clock struck the quarter before four, and, with a start, Mr. Hitchens realised that his 'Melia was not forthcoming that day. For the first time during that long succession of Sunday afternoons she had allowed a perfectly fine and cloudless one to come and go without even putting in an appearance.

Mr. Hitchens was flabbergasted. As he slowly turned and left the gate, it was to him almost as though the universe were turned upside down. For something over a quarter of a century he and Miss Binks had taken their Sunday stroll together, with the exception of those occasions when the weather had proved unfavourable.

On this particular and eventful day, however, it was not the weather, but Miss Binks herself who, in spite of his not having caught a glimpse of her, had frowned upon him.

Mr. Hitchens rubbed his left whisker against the grain, and opined that this "were a queer start!" So she meant to give him the go-by after all these years, did she? And all because—at least, he

s'posed that must be it—he wasn't altogether prepared to rush off and get married in about a couple of years' time!

Well, he'd always heard as women was fickle, and now he knowed it for a fact.

On the whole he wasn't sure that he hadn't had a lucky escape. Such a display of temper as he had just been treated to seemed to indicate plainly that she was not the sort of young woman to have made him comfortable. A party as would turn nasty over such a little thing as that wasn't the right party for him.

All the same, as he passed absently along, with his head bent low and his eyes fixed upon the ground, so that at least half the salutations bestowed on him by acquaintances remained unheeded, he was conscious that the prospect of commencing another lengthy courtship at his time of life seemed a very uphill and doubtful sort of one.

He was used to Miss Binks. After keeping company with any one for twenty-five years or thereabouts, somehow you did seem to get used to them. Why couldn't she have waited a bit?

As to the lady herself, no sooner did she realise that she had actually sent Jim Hitchens to the right-about, than she sat down and had a good cry, and forgot all about putting the kettle on.

"'Melia, my gal," said her father a week or two later, as he observed that his daughter confined herself to a single helping of cold pork, and seemed quite indifferent to stuffing, "you ain't a-pinin' arter that there young man o' yourn, are you?"

"Ma!" answered Miss Binks, jabbing her fork viciously into a potato, "do I look that sort?"—which she didn't, being what was generally described as "short and stocky," with a nose that bore a family resemblance to the spout of the kettle, and a mouth that could accommodate a whole regiment of pins. "I only wish," she went on, sticking her fork in still deeper, "I only wish as I'd got 'im 'ere"—a remark, by-the-bye, which might be variously interpreted; the more so as, having delivered it, she appeared to be troubled by the presence of a crumb in her throat, which brought on a fit of coughing which, in turn, resulted in leaving her eyes rather weak.

There was, as may be imagined, considerable comment in the town when it became generally known that the courtship of Jim Hitchens and Miss Binks had come to an unexpected and untimely termination. In fact, it was such a universal

topic and source of comment and interest that wherever two or three, particularly of the gentler sex, were gathered together, they were sure to be engaged in discussing the latest authorised version of the affair. Even comparative strangers, or persons from outlying districts, would have the news sprung upon them, and be expected to exhibit symptoms of unmitigated surprise when so enlightened.

"S'pose you know as how Jim 'Tchens and Miss Binks 'as left off keepin' comp'ny? Lor, yes; folks do say as it were 'cause she were in too much of a 'urry to get married, and Jim, he were allers a cautious one, wouldn't give in to it, and so she up and told 'im as it were all off betwixt 'em, and Jim, he ain't seemed like the same since."

What was surprising was that there was actually more truth in this last assertion than is generally to be looked for in promiscuous reports. Gradually, from the time that Miss Binks had refused to put on her bonnet for his benefit, Jim Hitchens's appetite steadily declined, so that his Sunday clothes, when he had sufficient strength of mind to don them, hung on him in bigger creases than before, his tendency to knock-knees increased, and he became more drab-coloured than ever.

Spring passed, summer came, autumn went, and winter was at hand, when one day tidings went round that Jim Hitchens, who had for a month or two past been troubled with a little hacking cough, had taken to his bed.

Of course this was not long in reaching Miss Binks's ears. She affected to receive the information with great equanimity, not to say indifference, observing as "Jim 'Tchens always were a poor sort." All the same, when she was filling the kettle for tea, something splashed into it that was not pump water.

"Drat the man!" she exclaimed, as she passed one hand in front of her eyes. "Not as there can be much the matter with him, though. He'll soon be out and about agen and makin' a fool o' somebody else."

But she was wrong in her surmise.

"'Melia, my gal," said her father about a fortnight later, "I've jest been 'earin' as 'ow the doctor's got but small 'opes o' Jim 'Tchens, and—lor, 'Melia!"

Miss Binks had uttered a sharp, involuntary cry. But it was nothing, she assured her parent, only a pin that she had stuck in a little too deep. The same

afternoon, however, she effectually ruined the kettle's constitution for life by putting it on to boil—empty! The next morning—it was Sunday—she received a message. She had packed her old father off to chapel as usual, and was giving as much of her attention as was available to the dinner when it arrived. It was to the effect "as Mr. 'Itchens persented he's compliments to Miss Binks and would be 'appy to see 'er if she would be so kind as to be so good as to step up that arternoon 'bout three o'clock or ha'-past."

It being Sunday, Miss Binks was unable to express her conflicting feelings in her ordinary professional manner, but managed to return an answer in the affirmative. The result of it all being that old Binks was quite justified when he declared that the dinner was one of the worst he'd ever sat down to; the meat being burnt to a chip, the potatoes hard in the middle, and the cabbage all of a slosh, while there were actually pins in the gravy.

"I don't wonder as you ain't got no happytite, 'Melie," he grumbled. "These is wittles as a happytite 'ud be throwed away on. As reminds me," he continued, somewhat irrelevantly, "as I did 'ear as Jim 'Itchens ain't expected to last out another week."

At half-past three o'clock, Miss Binks put on her bonnet with trembling fingers, and sallied forth.

Jim Hitchens lived in a little drab-coloured corner house about half-way down the High Street. Since his illness a married sister had come over from one of the neighbouring villages to look after him, else he had always lived alone, with a woman to come in now and then "to do for him."

Poor Jim! He would require little further "doing for," it being only too evident that he was on the point of being "done for" altogether.

He was so weak and such a ghost of his former self, that Miss Binks's feelings

became too much for her, and she, so to speak, boiled over at the sight of him, just like the kettle.

"Oh, Jim," she cried, casting etiquette to the winds, "oh, Jim, my dear, whatever 'ave you been a doin' of to yourself?"

"Nothin', Miss Binks, nothin' to speak of," was the feeble reply.

Then, as she sat down by the side of the bed and listened to his laboured breathing, her heart smote her more and more for her faithlessness and cruelty in the past, until the tears ran even down her bonnet-strings, rusting all the pins they encountered, and taking the starch out of her best collar. Half an hour or so passed without another word being uttered on either side. Then the sick man made an effort.

"You'll be wonderin', Miss Binks, why I've took the liberty to send for you, only—you see—the doctor; he don't seem to think as 'ow I'll last much longer—but—afore I go——"

The perspiration was standing on his forehead, and each succeeding word came slower than the last.

"But—afore I go—I thought as I owed it to you—seein' 'ow long we kep' comp'ny—to——"

The voice was so weak, that Miss Binks had to lean down and put her ear almost to his mouth to catch the meaning of the last words.

"To—ask you—to—name the day!"

Jim Hitchens died the same week, but not before Miss Binks had the satisfaction of knowing that "the day," so long delayed, had been fixed at last.

"Ah," she used to say to her sympathising friends, "pore Jim! We kep' company a goodish while, me and 'im, and the very day was fixed—it were to a-been June twelmonth—when he up and died. 'Owsomever, it were a great comfort to me to know as 'is hintentions was honnerable at the last."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

*Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XLIII

THE red glow from the setting sun had shifted a little. It fell now behind Julian and between him and Clemence, and its light seemed to isolate the mother and son, shutting them in alone together. Mrs. Romaine stood a few paces from Julian, not touching him or appealing to him, concentrating all her forces on the dominating of his weaker nature. Julian stood doggedly before her, his hands clenched, his face set. Near the window, looking across the shabby little room from which those two figures, eloquent of struggle and crisis, stood out so strangely, was Clemence, her eyes fixed upon Julian now as though life and death hung on his looks. Aloof alike from Clemence and from the mother and son, a grim spectator holding in reserve his weight of condemnation until the upshot of the scene should declare itself, was Dennis Falconer.

For all answer, as though her ringing words had touched him so little that he found them not even worth the trouble of an articulate denial, Julian shook his head sullenly. The gesture witnessed to a heavy dead weight of dissent likely to be more difficult to act upon than the most vehement opposition, and Mrs. Romaine paused for a moment, looking at him, her lips taking a firmer line, her eyes flashing.

"You don't realise the position," she said. "Look at it and understand the choice before you. On the one hand is

ignominy, ruin, the end of your career; to reach it you have only to give way to your nerves, to act under the influence of panic: to run away, in short. On the other hand," she moved a step nearer to him with a tense, emphatic gesture, which seemed an outlet for some of the passionate urgency which she was keeping resolutely in hand, "on the other hand is the very reverse of all this. Social position, consideration, the prosperous life to which you have always looked forward—all this is to be retained by one bold stroke, by a little courage and resolution, and at the risk of what is by no means worse than the life which must inevitably be yours if you do not nerve yourself to run it. Julian, think what is at stake!"

Falconer's eyes had been fixed on Mrs. Romaine, severe, inexorable in their condemnation. They travelled, now, to Julian.

Again Julian made that dull gesture of negation.

"It's all over," he said doggedly. "I've staked and lost."

"You have not lost—yet," his mother cried; the vibration in her voice was stronger now, and there were white patches coming and going faintly about her mouth. "You shall not lose while I can lift a hand to save you. Think!—think! It's all before you still—happiness, success, life! You've only to grasp them instead of letting go. Think!"

Julian had been standing with his haggard young face averted from her, staring sullenly at the ground. He turned upon her suddenly, his face quivering with an impotent misery of regret, his voice ringing with hopeless bitterness.

"They're gone," he said. "I've thrown them all away. I might as well be dead,

that's true enough. It might be possible to brazen it out—I don't know, I don't care! It wouldn't give me anything worth having. Social position, credit, standing! What good would they be to me? I'm sick of the whole thing! I've done with it!"

His incoherent, hardly articulated words stopped abruptly, and he seemed to struggle fiercely for means of expression, so fiercely that the blind, impotent wrestle with the limitation of a lifetime seemed to dominate the situation for the moment, and in Mrs. Romaine's agonised face, as she watched him, the life seemed arrested. It was as though he were groping and fighting among sensations and instincts so new to him that he had no words in his vocabulary in which to clothe them, and the effort to express them was instinct with the despair of conscious futility. He seemed to break away at last and rush upon a wild, confused declaration which comprised all that he could grasp.

"Why should I fight for what I don't want?" he cried hoarsely. "There's nothing worth having now."

"My boy!" The cry arrested Clemence moving towards Julian with shining eyes and white, parted lips. It arrested Falconer, who had drawn nearer to Mrs. Romaine, with a desperate impulse to end the struggle by throwing into the scale, against Mrs. Romaine, the weight of his opinion. "My boy, my boy! don't talk like that, for Heaven's sake! For Heaven's sake, Julian, my darling, if not for yourself, for your mother! I have lived for you. I have had no thought in life but you—to save you, to protect you, to keep you from ruin such as this! Don't break my heart. Ah!" she broke into a low, wailing moan, wringing her hands together as her eyes fastened on his face, transfixed into an expression of blank surprise as his eyes met hers for the first time. "Don't look like that! Julian, Julian! In all these years have you never understood? Have you never understood how I have loved you?"

They were face to face, mother and son, all the artificialities and conventionalities of their lives scorched and burnt away. But between them lay that unbridgeable gulf of ignorance and wrong, and her outstretched hands appealed to him in vain. He looked at her coldly, uncertainly, as though she were a stranger to him.

Then, with one strange, gasping cry, she seemed to thrust all consciousness of herself fiercely on one side in her realisa-

tion of his great need. In the very crisis of her agony, in the very crisis as it seemed of her defeat, there came upon her a great dignity.

"My son," she said, "there is something in your life of which you have never known—something which accident might have revealed to you at any time, but which I kept from you, hoping that fortune might favour me—as it has done—and preserve your ignorance; believing that in happiness and self-respect lay one of your safeguards, and dreading that knowledge might bring to you some sort of morbid temptation. Julian, it is the toil and struggle of twenty years that you are trampling on in throwing down your life like this. Twenty years ago your father died by his own hand—a swindler, liar, and thief. A few chance words brought home to me the possibility that some such dreadful taint might rest on you. To keep you from its awful consequence has been the one thought, the one motive in my life. To give you such a life as should obviate the possibility of temptation; to hedge you in with every security that money and position could create for you; to give you such a standing in the world as should leave you nothing to wish for; has been the one thought, the one motive of my life from that time until now."

The speech—so terrible a declaration of a struggle foredoomed by its own essence to failure, a struggle in which the foe was real, the combatant in desperate earnest, and her weapons straws—trembled into an abrupt, palpitating silence, as though her feelings were too intense for speech. There was a moment's stillness like the stillness of death; a stillness broken only by Julian's long, laboured breaths as he stood facing her, his face blanched and frozen into an image of horror. Then he spoke.

"Is it true?" He had turned mechanically to Dennis Falconer, and the words came from him in a hoarse whisper.

Dennis Falconer was white to the lips. Far down in his nature, at the root of the rigid and conventional morality by which he lived, was a pulse which palpitated in harmony with the divine realities of life. And, as like answers to like, that pulse in him had recognised its counterpart at last through all the cramped distortion that had concealed it for so long, beating full and strong, instinct with the throbbing life of the same great realities, in a dwarfed and darkened woman's soul. Perfect mother love, absolute self-abnegation, let

them clothe themselves in what mistaken form they may, are an earnest of ideal love and beauty, and in their presence condemnation must give place to reverence. Conscious, for the first time in his life, that he stood in the midst of that which was beyond his power to analyse or to estimate, he made no attempt at speech. He bowed his head in silence.

Julian looked at him for a moment longer, and then he turned his face once more upon his mother. As though what she saw there struck into her very heart, a cry of pity and tenderness broke from her. She moved swiftly to him, putting her arms about him, trying to draw him into her embrace as though he had been once more her little child.

"Julian!" she cried, "my boy! my boy! Try to understand—try to understand why I have told you this now! I don't ask you to think of me—to think what such a repetition of the past as threatens me in you would be to me—a blow infinitely heavier, an agony infinitely crueller than what came upon me twenty years ago, because of the long struggle to which it would bring defeat, because of the long hope and resolution which it would take out of my heart, because of my love for you, my darling—my darling!" She was kissing his hands now passionately, with that oblivion of any other presence in the room which she had evinced throughout; and Falconer, watching her, fascinated, almost awestruck, saw her, as she went on, lift one of the young man's hands and press it to her cheek, stroking it with a wild, nervous movement of her own thin fingers. "But there's a motive power for you in it, Julian! A lever for your own pride, your own strength of will. You are panic-stricken, unnerved, worn out. Danger is new to you, my darling! Look at your father's fate—wholesale ruin, disgrace, and obloquy—and let it nerve you to turn away from it. Look down the precipice on the brink of which you are standing, and lay firm hold upon the only rope that can save you. Take your courage in both hands, and we will face the danger and conquer together. Oh, my boy, if it is a hot fire to pass through it won't last long! It leads to safety, to firmer standing-ground, to a new lease of life!"

She was clinging to him convulsively, touching his hands, his hair, his face, as though speech alone afforded an all-insufficient outlet for her agonised beseeching.

And as she spoke the last words he seized her hands in his and thrust her from him, not with any personal roughness, but rather unconsciously and involuntarily as in the very isolation of despair.

"Life!" he cried. "What can life give to me beyond what I've got already? I've got my billet! Like father like son! I'm bound for the dogs sooner or later, and I don't care to spin out the journey. Who's going to fight against his fate?"

"It is not fate."

Through that little room, across and above the passion and despair that filled it, the words rang out strong and clear, and Julian turned with convulsive start to meet them.

Clemence had come swiftly across the room and was standing beside him, facing him as he turned to her; facing Falconer, arrested in a quick movement to interpose, blindly and instinctively as it seemed, between Julian and his mother; facing Mrs. Romayne, as she stood leaning heavily on the back of a chair, her eyes strained and terrible to see, her face ghastly. All that humanity can touch of the beautiful and the inspiring, all the burning faith, the quivering personal realisation of that unseen of which each man is a part, the human love acting upon and reacted on by the Divine instinct, was shining out from Clemence's face. She paused hardly for an instant as her clear eyes, dark and deep with the intensity of her fervour, rested on Julian, as though they saw him and him only in all the world. Then her voice rang out again, sweet and full.

"There's no such thing as fate," she said. "Not like that! Not fate that makes us bad. There's God, Julian! It's trying to do right that matters; nothing else in life; and that we can all do. There's nothing, nothing can prevent us! Oh, I don't say"—her voice broke into a great pity and tenderness—"I don't say that it's not harder for some than for others. But it's what's hard that is best worth doing! Julian!"—she drew a step nearer to him, stretching out both her hands—"you're looking at it wrong, dear! The things you've lost for good are not the things that matter. What one has, what people think of one—that's nothing. It's what one is, it's oneself that's the only thing to mind about." She stopped, her whole face stirred and tremulous with her conviction, and Julian, with an impulsive

movement, caught her hands in his, and pressed his forehead down upon them in a blind agony of self-abasement.

"I'm a swindler, Clemmie!" he cried thickly. It was as though he had hardly taken in the full sense of her words, but was clinging to her, and confessing to her under some blunted, bewildered impetus. "A cheat, and a thief all round! That's what I am!"

"But that's not for ever!" she cried, such love, and hope, and courage shining in her eyes as would not let her great tears fall. "You can retrieve the past! You can repent and begin again. Ah, I know, of course, that what is done can't ever be undone! What you have done remains the same for always! But you can change! You can be different, and nothing else but you yourself matters at all! What does it matter if people think you a cheat if you are an honest man? Nothing! No more than it matters to yourself if they call you an honest man for ever when you're a cheat!" She paused again, but this time he did not speak; he lifted his head and drew her to him, crushing her hands against his breast, and looking into her eyes with a strange, agonised struggle towards comprehension dawning in his own.

There was a moment's dead silence. There was that passing between Clemence and Julian which no words could have touched, the final struggle towards dominion of a man's better nature. Falconer had fallen back. All that was narrow and conventional about his morality had shrivelled into nothingness, and stood confessed in his own consciousness for what it was. He knew that the great question now at issue was beyond the reach of his man's narrow practicality, and that he could only stand aside.

Mrs. Romaine was gripping heavily at the chair by which she stood; impotent, frozen despair paralysing her from head to foot, leaving alive and sentient only her eyes.

"You must go back, dear." The words fell from Clemence's lips tender, distinct, immutable as the laws of right and wrong. "You must take the consequences of what you've done, and through that pain and shame you'll get above it to begin again."

Julian's lips, white now as ashes, moved stiffly.

"The consequences?" he whispered.

"The consequences, Clemmie?"

"The consequences," she replied, and in

the ring of her voice, in the clasp with which her hands closed over his, was all the courage and conviction with which she sought to nerve him. "Ah, I don't know—I don't understand—but are there no innocent people who may suffer for your fault unless you are there to take it on yourself? Besides, how else, dear? How can you begin again without having made amends? How can you free yourself of the past without acknowledging what's black and bad in it? And if you acknowledge what's black and bad, how can you hesitate to take its punishment?"

And as if that struggling life in him were growing and stirring under her influence, a strange flickering light crept into Julian's face and the struggle in his eyes grew into a faint suggestion of victory. He paused a moment, his breath coming thick and fast.

"But suppose—suppose it isn't any good?" his voice, tense, hardly audible, seemed to catch and strain like that of a man at the very crisis of his life. "Suppose it's in me and I must——"

"It isn't so!" she cried, and as she spoke she drew away from him as though carried beyond herself, beyond her womanly love for him, in that supreme declaration of the truth that was her very being. "You know it isn't so! There is no 'must' except God's 'must' to us that we should follow Him. There is no power can tear us from His hand unless we throw ourselves away by saying that His hand is without strength to save us. Good and evil lie before every one of us, and we must all choose. And nothing else is real and living in this life except that choice and the end to which it leads us!"

Through all the limitations of the phraseology in which her faith was clothed, the great truth which makes the mystery of humanity, the truth which words can only belittle and obscure, which lives not in words but in the silent consciousness of each man's soul, rang out, all penetrating and all dominating. And as she faced him, her eyes shining, her whole face radiated and glorified, Julian caught her in his arms with a great cry.

"I will," he cried. "Clemence, I choose. Help me! I will go back."

She yielded to his touch, with a low sob, and as they stood clasped in one another's arms, a shuddering moan rang through the room, and Mrs. Romaine fell heavily forward at their feet.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

"WILL she suffer any more?"

On the upper landing of the hotel in which Falconer had found Julian, Clemence was standing, one hand resting on the handle of a door which she had just closed behind her, looking in the uncertain light of a flickering gas-jet into the face of the man to whom she spoke. He was a quick, capable-looking man, with a brisk, professional manner, evidently a doctor. Clemence's face was pale and tired, as though with strain or watching, and her low voice shook a little. The doctor was drawing on his left-hand glove, and he paused to answer her.

"I should say that she would not," he said. "It is practically over." He gave a keen, rather curious look at Clemence and then added: "You are alone with the lady?"

"Yes," said Clemence simply.

A long night and a long day had passed—twenty-four hours and more—and between Mrs. Romaine and the one absorbing passion of her life had fallen that solemn shadow before which all earthly passions pale and fade away; that solemn shadow before whose creeping touch not strength of will, not love itself, can stand. As she fell to the ground before her son she had loosed her hold perforce on all the struggle and burning resolution which was life to her, she had followed the guide whom none may resist into that valley through which every one must pass, and its mists had lifted from her no more. From that one long faint she had been brought back only to fall into another; in such total unconsciousness, which had yielded twice to intervals of physical pain terrible to see, the long hours had passed.

And in one of these spaces of blank unconsciousness Julian Romaine had seen his mother for the last time. The necessity for his departure was pressing and relentless. The meeting of the shareholders was imminent, and that meeting he must face. He had left his mother's room in the grey light of the early morning with a look on his face which Clemence, the only witness of that mute parting, never forgot; and he had gone away with Dennis Falconer to make those preparations for his surrender of himself to justice which were not to be delayed.

And now the day was drawing to a close. The doctor had paid his last visit, and the night was drawing on.

There was a moment's pause after Clemence's words. Then the doctor wished her a professional good night, and, as he went downstairs, she turned and went back into the room.

It was a small room, the best which the hotel cared to place at the disposal of sudden illness, but somewhat dingy and ill-appointed. The gaslight, shaded from the face upon the bed, but shedding a garish light upon the rest of the room, touched nothing luxurious, nothing which its present occupant could have realised in connection with herself. Her very rings lying upon the dressing-table and flashing under the gaslight, seemed to protest against such poor surroundings.

But the figure on the bed lay motionless, protesting never more. It lay in blank unconsciousness even when Clemence, crossing the room, stood for a moment looking down, her whole face tender and quivering, and then sank gently on her knees and pressed her lips, with a womanly gesture of infinite pity and reverence, to the pale, inanimate hand upon the bed. It was over now, practically, as the doctor, looking at that waning life from a purely physical point of view, had said—all the struggle and the dread, all the courage and the hope, the valiant ignorance of twenty years. And the face upon the pillow was the face of the vanquished—the face of one whose last vivid consciousness of earthly things had been the consciousness of failure.

For many minutes Clemence knelt there, all the feeling of her woman's soul seeming to expend itself in that soft, mute pressure. Then she rose quietly and moved across the room to make some final preparation for the night. That done, she came back again to the bedside, and doing so she started. The shadowy hands were moving feebly upon the counterpane. From out the grey, pinched face upon the pillow two glazed blue eyes were looking with a restless, searching movement as though in want of something. They rested upon Clemence with no recognition in them; but as her son's wife drew nearer to her quickly and gently, Mrs. Romaine moved feebly and tried to turn her head upon the pillow, as though moved by some vague, indefinite, and far-away sense of dislike and repulsion. Her white lips moved uncertainly as she did so, and faint sounds came from between them. Clemence bent over her tenderly and tried to catch the words; and they grew gradually a little clearer.



"My boy!" the faint, uncertain voice muttered, "my little boy!"

A great wave of pity and yearning swept over Clemence, and she sank once more to her knees, fixing her beautiful tender eyes on the poor, worn face. Was it of any use to speak? Could her voice reach to those dim lands where the mother groped for her "little boy"?

"He will come!" she said. "He will come—by-and-by!"

As though the voice had roused her without penetrating to her brain, Mrs. Romaine moved again—that slight, feeble movement so eloquent of the extremity of weakness. Her eyes turned to Clemence with that glance of vague, unrecognising dislike.

"No," she said, as though answering her—"no, he's too little." She paused, and again there was that groping movement of her hands. "His letter," she muttered, "his letter! My dear mamma! my dear mamma!"

There was a restless distress in the glazed eyes now, and their glance tore Clemence's heart. The feeble hands were moving painfully, and as she watched, with her tears falling fast in her impotent pity and longing to satisfy their craving, something in their movements, all unmeaning as they seemed at first, penetrated to Clemence's understanding with one of those strange flashes of comprehension only possible under so tense a strain of sympathy. Those nerveless hands were feeling for a pocket! In an instant Clemence had risen, crossed the room, and put her hand into the pocket of the dress which Mrs. Romaine had worn. Her fingers touched a paper, and she drew it out instantly. She saw that it was yellow and faded with age, and she moved quickly back with it to the bedside. The hands and the eyes were still moving, but the muttered words were audible no longer, and as Clemence put the paper gently between the thin fingers, she felt with a sudden thrill of awe that they were growing cold.

But the touch seemed to rouse Mrs. Romaine once more. Her fingers closed on the paper as if instinctively, and the restless distress died out of her eyes as she tried—vainly—to unfold the paper. Clemence put out her hand gently, and did the work for which the dying fingers had no strength, and on the dying face there dawned a pale, shadowy smile.

"Yes!" she said. "Yes! 'My dear

mamma!' My dear mamma! Your loving—son—Julian!"

And with her son's name on her lips, Mrs. Romaine left him behind, and passed from ignorance to knowledge.

The trial and conviction of Julian Romaine were a nine days' wonder in society. The people who had most readily and carelessly received the widow and son of William Romaine, asked one another with the martyred air of those whose charity has been abused and their feelings for morality outraged, what was to be expected after all of the son of such a father? The people whose feelings for morality had been outraged at the outset by Mrs. Romaine's reappearance in London, and soothed subsequently by the simplicity of the position, observed sagely that they had always said so. Both parties were unanimous in the assertion that the young man's life was practically at an end. He had forfeited his place in society for ever.

But Julian himself knew—realised—gradually and painfully during the dreary years of his punishment; knew with the strength and courage of a manhood attained through pain, when he went away to a new country with his wife and child—that his life had just begun.

## FAIRY TALES.

"AND so he married the princess, and they lived happily ever afterwards." A fairy tale? Yes; why not? Are the fairy tales only for the children? Then for ever let me be a child. When Mr. Howells wrote that all the stories have been told, I think he must have meant that they already had been told when there still were fairies in the land. Is that, after all, so very long ago? For, if you come to think of it, you will find that the germs of all our stories are in the fairy tales. We but enshrine them, at the best, in what we imagine are fresh caskets; and leave the fairies out.

The story of Jack the Giant-Killer is told over and over again in the new stories, and in the new novels, which, day by day, are issuing from all the presses of the world. Only, in the latest versions, Jack is not called Jack, and the giants are not called giants. But they are slaughtered all the same. And he of the Beanstalk. In varying forms, his tale is being eternally

retold. And Little Red Riding Hood, this very day I have read her story for perhaps about the thousandth time—in a book which issued from the press perhaps a week ago. There was Red Riding Hood, and her Granny, and, above all, there was the Wolf. The whole tragic history. True, the names were different, and the story was told in quite another way. It was a case of old friends with new faces.

So it is with all the fairy tales. They are, all of them, always being told again. Why should we say they are only for the children? To do so would seem ungrateful, to say the least of it. One might go farther. One might venture, without much fear of contradiction, upon the statement that not only are the fairy tales still all alive, but the fairies too. Is there a man who is willing to affirm that to-day there are no fairies in the world? Surely that man has never lived. For my part, when I put down my pen, and look back through the years that have been, I seem to be looking back, through a long vista, into fairyland. As it were, my glance wanders from fairy tale to fairy tale. I fancy that, in this matter, I but join hands with most men who, as I understand the word, have lived. They may not be conscious of the fact, but I believe that it is so. And it is only when childhood has long been passed that they begin to realise what an intimate acquaintance they have had with a great company of the fairies.

Why should we attempt to blink the fact in literature? Why should no fairy tales which are avowedly fairy tales be written for the children who have grown old? Unless I err, a field of literally marvellous fertility for the writer remains untilled. A field which shall never be tilled by a fool; nor, adequately, by any but a man of might. In the tilling of this field there would be scope for all the talents. Obviously for the master of imagination. Yes, and for the student of men and of manners; if you will, for the moralist too. The workman would have opportunity to display, to the very best advantage, his gifts of satire and of pathos, of farce and of tragedy.

There has been a run of late upon what one might call the bastard imitation of the fairy tale. For instance, how often has the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves recently been retold? The story of the hidden treasure, which has been found, and, in the finding, almost lost

again. One need not name names. One has only to consider to remember at least a dozen recent versions. There is this difference between the original and the imitations. The imitators, unlike the original writer, who had a lordly indifference for trivialities of detail, strain every nerve to delete from the story all appearance of the supernatural. I do not know why. It has seemed to me, more than once, that the attempt has resulted in failure. Failure, that is, of the whole affair; of the story, from first to last.

Why should not the story of Ali Baba be applied to to-day? Not toned down, but, if anything, toned up instead. Why should not some one give us a Monte Cristo up to date? The fault of Dumas's story is, not only that it is full of contradictions, but that the writer continually departs from his original scheme. He sacrifices everything so that his hero may be revenged. After all, very little comes of the wealth which Monte Cristo found; except that the author apparently never looked over his proof-sheets, and it grows out of all knowledge of the original amount as the book goes on.

Not long ago, Mr. Andrew Lang, a faithful lover of the fairy lore, was giving plots away, free, gratis, and for nothing. A lesser than Mr. Andrew Lang would offer another plot upon precisely the same terms. A man chances on a secret store—a store which, translated into pounds, shillings, and pence, out-Herods Herod; to which that found in the Robbers' Cave could not compare; to which that chanced upon by the refugee from the Château d'If was as nothing. There should be no bones about the thing; no attempt to ascribe it, as Dr. Conan Doyle was attempting to ascribe a similar store the other day, to the latest development of science. There would be no allusion to compacts with the devil. No; the thing would be avowedly, purely and simply, a fairy tale up to date. If you like, the man might be a clerk in the City, and, also if you like, in an instant wondrous wealth might come to him out of the air.

There is the elementary idea. Does it offer no opportunity to a novelist—to any sort of novelist? Consider in how many ways it might be treated. It might be treated after the American manner, and you might make of your fairy tale a character study. You might show us what an effect the sudden accession of wealth had upon the man's individuality; give us a

study in psychology. In that case one may be excused for hoping that you will make your story but a little one. But still, you might. On the other hand, consider what a romance you might weave about the man; what a complication of interwoven plots! But, after all, I fear. I will be frank. The idea has been with me many and many a day. I dare not hint at all there might be made of it; at all the freshness, and novelty, and pleasurable excitement of which it might be made the basis. I feel persuaded that if I were to press my hints even a little farther, my offer would be accepted. I made it in the Spanish sense. In Spain your host will offer you anything his house contains which you may happen to admire. If you take it he will regard you as a thief. I never meant that any one should use my plot as if it were his own. Perhaps, some day, I may try my hand at it myself. I should not like to be accused of plagiarism, when, as usual, my story was being refused by all the publishers in town.

Mr. Christie Murray was angry with Mr. Howells for saying that all the stories have been told. And, in a sense, perhaps Mr. Howells was wrong. But, dear me, how alike they are! Good stories are continually coming into the world. But in theme and in treatment there is an almost painful family likeness, even among the best of them. They are of the earth, earthy. Not a real fairy tale among the lot. Is it because these clever authors think it is so easy to write a fairy tale? If so, the clever men are wrong. I doubt if it is possible to write a new fairy tale which shall please the children as the old ones used to do. Far and away the best fairy tales of recent years have been those of Lewis Carroll. I wonder if the children have liked Alice as much as their elders? I doubt it. I doubt if a child is capable of properly appreciating the exquisite art of Lewis Carroll. His art has a subtle flavour, is of a peculiar kind. Hans Christian Andersen was the last contriver of real fairy tales. His fairy tales are fairy tales, apart from the writing. Who among us could imagine the imaginings of Andersen?

But it is not for children that I plead for fairy tales. It is for the older folks. The children have the stories of old; to them even the old is new; for us, who have passed out of the fairyland of our childish days, why are there no fairies? Romances, so called, we have in plenty. I have no word to say against them, though

they were twice as many. I fancy that the folks who talk as that the world of romance is very far distant from the world of matter-of-fact, are wrong. We should read no romances, reiterate certain of the preachers, until one wearies of their iteration. We are told that they entangle our ideas; that they cause us to mistake the false for the true. Were we to listen to all the faddists, and to all the crotcheteers, there would be nothing read at all. All the books that have ever been would be placed upon the Index Expurgatorius. Read anything and everything, say I. Only fools are caught by folly. In any case, fools are but fools. Sooner or later, whate'er betide, they are sure to make it plain. By printed words no sane soul ever yet was hurt. As to romances entangling our ideas, and causing us to mistake falsehood for truth, stuff, dear brethren—stuff, and rubbish on to that! But few folks have ideas at all, and those few may be trusted to keep them free from tangle.

Romances, in their way, are very well. But at times they are not romantic enough for me. At times I want to get out of this world, right clean away into a world beyond; I want the cap of invisibility, and the carpet of locomotion. In the twinkling of an eye I want to move from Fleet Street to Bagdad. Or in the same space of time I want Bagdad to come to me. I want some one to people the Great City of the Maddening Smoke with fairies; I want, under such circumstances, to know what sort of city it would be.

If fairies were to have a hand in the affairs of Brown, how would it be with Brown? Or if Queen Mab were to pay a visit to Mrs. Jones, with what sort of eyes would Mrs. Jones look out upon the world while such a guest was in her house? Suppose the Merry Elves, Puck and all his tribe, were to alight one day in that abode of bliss in the neighbourhood of Capel Court, how would the bulls and bears behave? Think of the pranks which the little folk might play. With what merry malice they might set all the Exchanges of the world in an amazing whirl. What rackets there would be! Conceive, if you can, what might happen if the fairies, in a mirthful mood, were to take up their abode in London for but one single day. Will no one tell the tale? If Puck, or some such dainty rogue, were to flit about the Row for but one hour of a sunny summer's day; or, in the small hours, were to peep in at the smartest gathering

of the season. What "chroniques scandaleuses" would set the world a-tittering!

We must all of us know many people on whom we should like to have the fairies call. Would that good fairies would call on all sick and troubled folk; not as mere creatures of the imagination, but as actual creatures of flesh and blood! We have our Sisters of Mercy, who have shown the world this many a day that the quality which they represent may, indeed, be made twice blessed. But, in times of trouble, where would even a Sister of Mercy be if a fairy were to call? Think of what such a visit might be made to mean. Picture, as we scribblers like to phrase it, to yourselves the scene. The woman—it is to the women that the trouble comes oftenest and hardest—the woman borne down beneath the burden of her woe; let us each choose for ourselves our ideal grief, and have it that that particular grief is hers; nothing in the world to lighten it. There comes a little touch upon her arm. A tiny stranger is standing on the table by her side. *Pouf!* She knows not how—but her grief is gone.

The gratification of three wishes is a favourite theme in fairy tales. You are offered three wishes. Whatever you wish for you instantly have. What should you wish for, were such an offer made to you? It seems to me that the chief difficulty generally is, that the offer is made so unexpectedly. It takes you unawares. You are doing something quite commonplace—putting your stockings on, or hanging out the clothes, or chopping up sticks, or some ordinary thing of that kind, and, before you have the least idea of anything of the sort, your fairy godmother is standing at your side, and the offer is made. The result is that, so to speak, people are flabbergasted by the suddenness of the thing, and their wishes are apt to be remarkable for their incongruity.

I wonder what I should wish for if, this very instant, my fairy godmother were to appear at my right hand? Let me consider. It is just as well that one should consider the thing in advance, because, when the actual moment does arrive, it seems that sufficient time for careful consideration never is allowed. Fairy godmothers not only come in a hurry; they appear, also, to be in a hurry to get away. What would you wish for, out of all the potentialities in the whole wide world?

Perhaps, after all, it is just as well that one's choice, when it comes to plain fact and hard experience, is hurried. Because,

the more you consider, the more bewildered you are apt to become. I think, in the first place, that I should wish for health, perfect health, until the moment comes in which it is written that I shall die. And yet, I do not know—there you are, you see, bewilderment already! A healthy animal is a selfish animal. When one is in health one is apt to resent illness, even when it visits those one loves; to regard it almost in the light of a personal offence. No. Leave me human; very human, if you please. It may seem absurd—surely, in many matters, of deliberate choice one would be numbered with the fools!—but there are those whose sufferings I would share; whose sorrows I would make my own, always, to the end. I think, therefore, that I should have to modify my wish, and to ask for perfect health, not only for myself but also for all those who are as part and parcel of myself. And yet, again I do not know. I fancy that we should become a most superior family. I know that the Smiths, who are a robust lot, look down with a supercilious air upon the Browns whenever any of the Browns are ill. The Browns are weaklings. They always have a doctor's bill on hand. And to hear the Smiths talking with such an air of their never having had a doctor in the house, I believe, for five-and-fifty years, must be hard upon the Browns. I fear that if we could never be ill, and knew it, in the matter of superciliousness and so on we should soon out-Smith the Smiths. There are the physical sufferings of the world at large. One would scarcely desire to be altogether out of touch with them. One might be a cynic, and yet not deliberately choose to place oneself out of the possibility of feeling sympathy for the sufferings of one's fellow-men. It is doubtful if we can sympathise with what we cannot share.

I fancy that my first wish would have to take another shape. You see the dangers of too much consideration. To try again! I would like—yes, I certainly would like it, and I say so without the slightest hesitation!—I would like fifty thousand pounds a year. At the same time, I should like it to come from a legitimate source. I should have to tack that on to the wish as a sort of codicil. One says it with all reverence, but, if one may judge from the records, fairy godmothers appear to be rather difficult people to deal with. Illogical, as it were. I should not care to have mine take that fifty thousand pounds a year

from Jones, Robinson, and Thompson, and, perhaps, one or two more besides, and beggar them to make me rich. Not that I care for either Jones, Robinson, or Thompson. Not at all. Quite the other way. At the same time, so to speak, one would not care to batten on the meats which they, very properly, had intended for their own consumption. Then, of course, there occurs the question—why fifty thousand pounds a year? Why not make it a hundred thousand pounds a year at once? To-day, fifty thousand pounds a year men are nowhere. So they say. I speak from theory. I have had not much experience in that line myself. But a week or two ago I saw it written somewhere, that, nowadays, a man with only fifty thousand pounds a year could scarcely be considered rich. While one's fairy godmother was around, it would be a pity to spoil the ship for want of a ha'porth of tar. We are informed—I do not know by whom, but we are informed—that the late Mr. Jay Gould has left behind him fifteen hundred thousand pounds a year in good hard cash. When my fairy godmother comes in my direction, I shall ask her for fifteen hundred thousand pounds a year—straight out.

I don't know what I should do with it if I got it. I really don't. It would spoil all my scheme of life. That thing is sure. I like to live my own life, out of the glare. I should never be allowed to do it if I were the possessor of fifteen hundred thousand pounds a year. Oh dear! Oh dear! I should feel bound to spend it. How, I have not the faintest notion. I do not think that I have one extravagant taste—extravagant, that is, in the sense of the extravagance which is capable of squandering fifteen hundred thousand pounds a year. My conscience—it is not a sensitive one, but such as it is—would forbid me giving it away in lumps, haphazard. At least, I think it would. I might make an effort, and act against the dictates of my conscience. In common with my fellows I have done so before, and I might again. But I believe that I should feel constrained to bestow it only on deserving objects. The man who resolves to seek personally for deserving objects on whom to bestow his benefactions, provides himself with more than sufficient occupation to last him for the poor remainder of his life. Oh dear! Oh dear!

On the whole, I am inclined after all to hope that, when my fairy godmother

does come my way, she will take me unawares. If I have to think out my three wishes in advance and to have them allready for her, cut and dried, I fancy that I shall never wish at all. In such a position, the man who considers, like the woman who hesitates, is lost. If my fairy godmother were to come upon me plump, and were to take me unawares, and were to offer me the proverbial choice, perhaps, on the spur of the moment, I might be able to take advantage of her offer. And, if I did, a pretty fool I should make of myself, no doubt. All the choosers, in the records, have been pretty fools. I should be in a large, if not in good company. You would be wiser than I, or than any of them, no doubt. You would choose, and choose wisely and well, and never for an instant would you regret your choice. I should like to put myself in your place, and see. Only I should reserve to myself the right to withdraw from your place when I had had enough of it.

How would it do to keep a fairy in the house, whom one might ask for a thing whenever one wanted it—a sort of Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp? How charming it sounds in theory! In practice, how would it work? Man is a finite being. His capacity is limited. Satisty soon sets in. What a satiated wretch Aladdin must have been! He had only to want, to have. He must have got sick to death even of wanting, very soon. A finite being possessed of infinite power—can the imagination conceive of a fate more horrid? It was the most fortunate thing which ever happened to him in his life, when the magician obtained possession of that old lamp in exchange for an article which was, at any rate, stated to be brand-new. Surely a greater idiot than Aladdin never lived, or he would have been content to allow that ill-omened piece of property to play Old Harry with some one else. But so sorely was he cursed, that his every wish was destined to be gratified, right to the nauseously satiating end. The lamp, the source of all his woes, became his again. Alas, poor Aladdin!

Then there were those other fairy gifts, which, in theory, we most of us know so well. For instance, there was that carpet of locomotion. I wonder what I should do with it if it were mine. I think that I should plump myself upon it, and insist upon its transporting me, in less than the twinkling of an eye, to somewhere where the sun was shining. Yes, and then? It

would be no use to have a carpet of that sort unless one used it well, and often. To take proper advantage of its exceptional qualities would necessitate a considerable amount of travelling. I suspect that the fact of its possession would soon be felt to be an incubus. One would have to be always on the go. Relatively, a commercial traveller might be regarded as being rooted to the ground. Then think of the perils which its ownership would entail. A burglar might break into your house and steal, then plant his booty and himself upon your carpet, and, with swiftness far exceeding that of the electric telegraph, vanish into air. Looking at the question widely, from a liberal-minded point of view, I am conscious of no overwhelming desire that the carpet of locomotion should come my way.

As for the cap of invisibility, that always did seem to me to be a dangerous thing to have; more dangerous than dynamite. If it were mine, I feel sure that I should never dare to put it on my head. I hear quite enough of people's candid opinions upon personal topics as it is. What I should do if I were present at a séance at which I was supposed to be absent, and at which the topic of conversation happened to be myself, I am unable to imagine. Only I am persuaded that there would be unpleasantness all round. The cap of invisibility would only enable one to play the spy. It is not clear what net advantage would be gained by that. We are, most of us, blindworms. We do not see much. Yet, not seldom, we see too much for our own happiness. Rather than be destined to see and to hear all that might be seen and heard, it would be better for a good many of us to die.

That wonderful spyglass which enabled one, while seated at one's own fireside, to see anything, anywhere, was not one whit more desirable a possession than the cap of invisibility. If you recall all, or any, of the wonder-working trifles which are mentioned in the chronicles of the days of the fairies, if you reason them out, you will find, at the very least, that one is just as well without them. There is this to be noted. In the chronicles, as they have been handed down to us, the owners of the marvels only used them for certain definite purposes; and, having used them for those definite purposes, they appear to have used them for nothing else. There was an end of them, as it were. Sometimes, we are gravely in-

formed, they were placed in museums—Caliphs' museums, and similar equivalents for our marine stores—and preserved as curiosities. Nowadays, we should change all that. The modern man who became the possessor of the cap of invisibility would feel bound, not only to use it for certain definite purposes, but to keep on using it. Bound! Yes, to the bitter end. That is human nature, as we know it in the present year of grace. And that is where the mischief would come in.

We are not only entitled to love fairy tales, without being requested, therefore, to take the lowest seat; but I do think that there is cause to wonder why no fairy tales are being told to-day. Not in burlesque fashion, but gravely, as of old. Why, for instance, should not some one give us a serious study of a modern man who becomes possessed, say, of the cap of invisibility? What a romance might be built upon that one possession! Does no one see it? Not a novelist of them all? If no one has eyes with which to see, it really must be because they are lacking in what, I have seen it written somewhere, should be the novelist's chiefest attribute—the power of making the impossible appear the real. Perhaps, some day, a great story-teller shall arise who, at least while he continues to hold us in the thrall of his magic, shall have the power to make us believe in the wonderful tale which he shall weave, even about what may seem—to those whose imaginations are a-lacking—to be the impossible central motive of the cap of invisibility.

#### THE QUESTION.

DEAR, do you quite forget? The soft sweet light  
Creeps through the stillness of the southern night;  
The wavelets whisper on the golden sand,  
The scented breeze comes sighing from the land;  
The white stars burn in the great purple arch;  
And yet it is the very night in March,  
When to the thunder of the northern shore,  
While the wild waves broke in with crash and roar,  
Beside the dying fire we pledged the vow  
That is—ah, well!—discreetly buried now.

All day I've watched the sunshine dazzling down  
On the pine woods above the fishing town;  
Spoken and smiled, exchanging careless greetings,  
With those who never knew of those old meetings  
In the deep chimes between each sandy hill,  
While the winds swept above us, fierce and shrill;  
Little we recked, we two, of dark grey weather,  
So we might dream our golden hopes together!

Now many a lengthening league between us lies.  
We read no more in one another's eyes  
Omen or promise; the keen English life  
Whirls you along in its impetuous strife;  
Fight on, oh gallant heart! while far away,  
On the soft shores of the fair foreign bay,  
I watch the sun in southern glory set,  
And sometimes ask my heart, "Does he forget?"

## AT CROSS PURPOSES.

## A COMPLETE STORY.

It was all Celia's fault.

If it hadn't been for her it would never have occurred to me to quarrel with Jack; it would never have occurred to me that any quarrel was necessary to prove the strength of his love; I should have taken it for granted, and been happy still.

I detest Celia!

We were so happy till she came to stay with Jack's people, and told me I was spoiling him. Of course it was no business of hers if I were, she admitted that; but she was so fond of me that she felt she must speak, being older and more experienced than I, and implore me to remember that it wasn't only my lover I was spoiling, but my future husband; and if I let him have his own way in everything now, I should never be able to have mine by-and-by when we were married. She spoke so seriously about it that I couldn't help being a little impressed, though of course I didn't let her know that; and I wouldn't have told her for the world that I intended to act on her advice the very first opportunity that offered. For it was one thing to quarrel privately with Jack, but quite another to tell Celia that I was going to do it, and take her into my confidence against him.

So Jack and I quarrelled at the Hornes' dance last night.

I hardly know what it was about in the first instance, but it grew and grew till it seemed to me there was nothing we weren't quarrelling about; and Jack was soon terribly in earnest. Though we had been engaged for three weeks, I'd no idea he had it in him to be so angry; and of course I lost my head, and got angry, too—really angry—and said horrid things; and—and—I told him our engagement was broken off, and there must be an end of everything between us; and—and—Jack took me at my word. I never thought of his doing that.

"As you please," he said, speaking quite quietly all of a sudden. We were in the conservatory, and the dance-music in the drawing-room must have drowned the sound of our voices half-a-dozen yards away. "You wish our engagement to end, Maud? So be it. Your letters shall be returned to you to-morrow, and I will at once leave you free to resume your flirtation with Frank Horne."

"But—Jack——"

His face was set and white. He never even looked at me. The music ceased. Celia and several other dancers strolled into the conservatory, and Jack left me.

Yes, he went away and danced with other girls; and he never spoke one word to me, or came near me again the whole evening.

Of course I danced too—what else could I do under the circumstances? I danced with Frank Horne, and I flirted with him a little—not as Jack flirted with Molly, and Kate, and Celia, and half-a-dozen more—but just enough to show him that I could amuse myself very well without him, and that I wasn't taking our quarrel to heart.

I was acting a lie, and I did it very creditably.

Yes, Jack and I have quarrelled, and it is all Celia's fault.

Our engagement is broken off—we have said that it is not to be an engagement any more—and now——

Oh, how miserable I am

It is a dull November afternoon, and mamma has gone out, so I sit alone in the fire-lit drawing-room, and think over all that happened last night, and wonder what Jack's next move will be. Surely—surely, he cannot mean——

He has not returned my letters yet; surely that is a hopeful sign.

I am still wearing the ring he gave me. I suppose if he returns my letters, I shall have to——

No—no, I can't part with it. He could not be so cruel, so unreasonable.

His letters, too. Must I give them up? I turn them over in my hand—such a little bundle of them as there is, and so very hard to read till one learns to know the writing, or to love the writer, which is it—and remember the pleasure with which I first received them, and the pride with which I have often pored over them since. I pore over them now, straining my eyes to decipher the well-known characters in the flickering firelight. Dear Jack, what a vile hand he writes, and how very nicely he expresses——

Hark! some one is crossing the hall. Surely Jane won't be so foolish as to show any one in here now.

In another moment "Mr. Drayton" is announced, and Jack himself stands before me.

"Jack!" I start to my feet, and all those treasured documents fall, rustling, to

the floor, but I never think of them. Who thinks of love-letters in the presence of the writer? Jack is here, my Jack, and——

But is he indeed my Jack?

The first glance at his face recalls me to myself, and reminds me that he is no longer my Jack, or Jack at all to me. I told him I wished our engagement to end, and he remembers it evidently, though I for one brief moment have forgotten. Oh, Jack—Jack!

He waits till the servant has left the room, then takes a small packet from the breast-pocket of his coat, and turns to me.

"This must be my apology for disturbing you," he says very formally. "I thought I had better bring it myself in case of accidents."

"For me?" I speak vaguely, and without offering to take it. I want to gain time.

"Yes—your letters. I have no right to them now."

"How—how beautifully you have packed them!"

He turns away with an impatient gesture, and lays them on the table.

"I need not detain you any longer, now my errand is done," he says quietly.

"But—there is something else. Oh, you forget!" as he looks at me questioningly. "You have returned my letters promptly enough—how can I thank you for such promptness?—but you forget your own. As you say, I have no right to them now."

"You wish me to take them? Very well."

But I do not wish him to take them; anything but that! I want to postpone the moment of parting; that is all.

"Will you be good enough to fetch them?"

"They are here, on the floor. Will you be good enough to help me pick them up?"

He does so without a word. Together we stoop to collect them; together we lay them on the table. Together for the last time!

I bring paper and string, and proceed to pack them up; while he watches me in silence.

"I fear this will not be such a neat parcel as yours," I say, speaking as steadily as I can, and bending over the table to hide my troubled face. "You know I'm never good at this sort of thing."

"I know," shortly.

"I can't do it!" and a great tear

splashes on the packet. "I'm very sorry, but——"

"Don't bother about it," and he lays his hand on mine suddenly. "No need for such a fuss. Give them to me as they are."

"What are you going to do with them?" as he takes them from my trembling hands.

"Put them in the fire!" and he turns to do so.

"No, no, no!" I cry, springing forward, and laying a detaining hand on his arm. "Oh; don't, Jack!"

"Why not?" pausing. "You don't want them, and I'm sure I don't."

"I—I do! Please give them back to me!"

"What for?"

"To keep! To remind me——"

"Of my folly?"

"Of my own. I——"

"Your folly is over and done with! Our engagement is broken off!" he says moodily. "Better forget it ever existed."

"I cannot do that!" with an irrepressible little sob. "I am waiting for those letters."

"Take them, then," and he throws them down on the table. "Keep them to compare with Horne's, if you like. I don't care!"

"How can you insult me so? What right have you to think me so mean, so heartless?" I cry indignantly. "And you cared for me once—or pretended to!"

"I did care; I care now, though I know I'm only a fool for my pains!" bitterly. "Heartless, do you say? How can I help thinking you heartless after your conduct last night?"

"My conduct? And what of yours? If I danced with Frank, and—yes, flirted with him a little; you were flirting all the time with Celia, and Molly, and—oh, there wasn't a girl in the room that you didn't flirt with! You know there wasn't!"

"Yes; and you should know that there is safety in numbers," he retorts, fixing his dark eyes on mine reproachfully. "But you, Maud, you flirted with Frank all the time; and with no one but Frank. A very different thing."

"And what was I to do when you deserted me? Sit still and look miserable? Thanks, no! Really, you are unreasonable."

"You forget that I did not desert you, as you call it, till after you had given me



to understand that I wasn't wanted. You told me to go, and I went."

"You did—on the instant!"

"And you blame me for that now! Did you not mean me to take you at your word?"

I look at him as he stands, very tall and erect, on the other side of the fireplace, his brown eyes, with a certain defiance in them, watching me intently, and I feel thankful that at least we are not going to part in silence. His love may not be strong enough to stand the test of our quarrel, but still—he loves me. Oh, if only——!

"Did you not mean me to take you at your word?" he repeats.

"Not like that," slowly. "You went—oh, yes—as if you were glad to go. I dare say you were, but you needn't have betrayed your feelings quite so plainly."

"I haven't the smallest intention of betraying my feelings for your gratification," he says, with some warmth. "You have treated me shamefully, but I see little use in discussing it now. I don't want to reproach you for jilting me. You've done it, and that's enough."

"Jilting you! Oh, Jack!"

"Call it what you please," and he turns away wearily. "We won't quarrel about that. Celia was right, I see."

"Celia?"

"Yes, she said it would only make matters worse if I saw you. I didn't believe her, but——"

"Celia tried to stop your coming?"

"If you like to put it in that way, yes," with a look of surprise. "But I thought I ought to bring those letters myself, so I came."

"From a bitter sense of duty; I understand."

"Not altogether that." He hesitates a moment, and then adds quickly: "I may as well tell you all since I am here. I thought—that is, I hoped—there might have been some misunderstanding, and you have said more than you really meant. It all seems so sudden to me, you know, for I had not grown tired of our engagement, whatever you may have done. But since you evidently wish to quarrel with me, I won't stand in your way. You might have trusted me, though, as you have trusted Celia."

Celia again! I begin to hate the sound of her name!

"Celia seems to have been unwarrantably busy with my affairs," I say coldly. "I don't know, of course, what she may,

or may not, have told you; but this I do know, that I have never trusted her, and that I trust her less than ever now."

"You are ungrateful, surely. She tried to spare you this interview."

"Had it not been for her, it would never have been necessary. But go to her, since you'd rather take her word than mine," passionately. "Go to her, and tell her that she has succeeded, thanks to my folly and your——"

I break off, unable to speak for the rising sobs that choke my utterance, and turn away abruptly to the window.

"Succeeded? Celia?" he repeats, more to himself than to me. "Maud, what is the meaning of all this? Is it possible that Celia misunderstood——"

"She misunderstood nothing." I speak in a dull, expressionless way, and without turning round. "She is far too clever for that. It is you who misunderstand, and I."

"What have I misunderstood? Oh; if you won't tell me I must go to Celia and——"

"Yes, go to her. What are you staying here for?"

"Nothing now," and he walks to the door. In another moment he will be gone.

Can I let him go like this? No, a thousand times, no.

"Wait," and I turn impulsively; "you—you have forgotten something."

"Have I? And what?"

"Your ring. I have no right to it now, as you say."

"I never said so, but——" he checks himself. "Give it to me, then."

"Come and take it."

I cannot, I will not take it off. I try in a feeble, purposeless sort of way, conscious that his eyes are upon me all the time. Then I desist and look at him, laughing nervously.

"I can't do it, Jack; if you want it you must take it off for yourself," and I hold out my hand.

He takes it in silence, but he makes no effort to remove the ring. Instead of that he looks at me for a moment and shakes his head.

"No, dear, I don't want it. If it is to come off at all you must take it."

"It seems almost a pity, doesn't it?" I say softly, and my voice is scarcely so steady as it might be. He makes no reply, but passes his arm round my waist and his hold on my hand tightens.

"I've got used to it, you see, and I should  
 peak it. May I keep it, Jack?"

"On one condition."

"And that is——?"

"That you keep me too."

"Oh, Jack, how gladly!"

He is my Jack once more, and I tell  
 him all, my head on his shoulder.

Our quarrel is over, and we both detest  
 Celia. She can never come between us  
 any more.

### THE BRECKNOCK BEACONS.

THE Brecknock Beacons are notable  
 peaks in a land that has no lack of  
 mountains. If they were in England,  
 they would long ago have acquired high  
 fame for their picturesqueness. But they  
 are in Wales; they are hedged around  
 with other mountain masses; and they  
 are approached by no very admirable  
 service of trains. These things are a bar  
 to their celebrity. The bar deserves to be  
 weakened as much as possible.

From the little grey town of Brecon  
 the Beacons stand forth superbly. There  
 is a foreground of meadows and well-  
 cultivated fields, watered by the Usk,  
 which draws its silver thread through  
 their midst; thence the mountains spring  
 boldly, and over them the three angular  
 summits rear their bald red heads with  
 an effectiveness that leaves little to the  
 imagination. It is not here as in Dart-  
 moor, where the plough has gained the  
 upper hand over Nature. A slight  
 "chevaux-de-frise" of coppices on the  
 slopes, and wire-enclosed pastures exist in  
 places. There are also collie dogs, some-  
 times curious about the texture of strange  
 trousers. Otherwise, it is easy to pass  
 from the zone of farms to the zone of  
 untrammelled mountains. It is not so  
 easy to gain the topmost crag of Pen-y-Fan,  
 the highest point of the Beacons. The  
 gradient in places is severe, and provoca-  
 tive of panting. This is especially so at  
 the summit. But perseverance meets with  
 its due reward in a broad view that  
 credits Pen-y-Fan with all its two thousand  
 nine hundred and ten feet above the sea-  
 level.

The characteristic feature of the Beacons,  
 after their boldness, is their colour. On  
 their steeper faces they are blood-red—or,  
 to be strictly truthful, sandstone red.  
 From their lower parts this colour shows  
 most impressively. You see a series of

four or five glowing precipices. They are  
 very real precipices too. The north-  
 eastern escarpment of Pen-y-Fan falls  
 several hundred feet at an angle of sixty  
 or seventy degrees, and its neighbour  
 peaks have similar cliffs. You can see  
 nothing finer of its kind in our island;  
 but to appreciate these red faces you must  
 get near to them. From Brecon and else-  
 where on a fine day their predominating  
 colour is an indefinite grey; and in dark  
 weather all is black and fearsome. It is  
 quite worth while to risk one's calves with  
 the sheep-dogs to get even but on com-  
 prehending terms with the Beacons.

The lanes of the lowlands that lead up  
 to the flanks of the mountains are charm-  
 ing specimens of the English lane at its  
 best. They are narrow and high-hedged,  
 in places arched over by trees, and in the  
 early summer an astonishing variety of  
 bird-music sounds upon all sides. The  
 hedge undergrowth is bright with ferns  
 and mosses, and all the common wild  
 flowers assert themselves. Wild roses,  
 honeysuckle, and foxgloves are very  
 much to the front, and the errant sprays  
 of dog-rose make delightful frames for the  
 mountain masses beyond.

From the lanes we pass to the wilder  
 meadows, still studded with gorse and um-  
 brageous hawthorns. Orchids grow in  
 these moist, warm lands. The bleating of  
 sheep and lambs is constant here—varied  
 towards evening by the stentorian in-  
 structions of the shepherd, and the sheep-  
 dog's short, sharp, responsive barks. The  
 swelling bulk of the mountains begins  
 with the meadows, and you ascend toil-  
 somely, the wind buffeting your cheek  
 more and more heartily every minute. It  
 is a racy air, this of the Beacons. Central  
 Wales is so pervaded with mountains, that  
 no matter from what direction the wind  
 blows it has had little intercourse with the  
 plains are coming to the Beacons. South  
 only is there any hazard of pollution.  
 Here are the furnaces and mines of the  
 great Merthyr district; you do not see  
 signs of them, however, until you are on  
 Pen-y-Fan's summit. If the shock they  
 cause is insupportable, you have then only  
 to turn east, west, or north for the  
 antidote. It is rather hard, nevertheless,  
 not to admire the human energy which  
 has tackled nature here so mercilessly, at  
 such a considerable elevation above the  
 sea.

It is but a short ramble from the sum-  
 mit of one Beacon to the other summits.

The easterly points are the best worth attention for their thrills. One or two people have come to an end from these edges. Their imprudence, of course, has been the death of them; but after gazing for a while at these walls of gory red, something of fatal fascination seems to get hold even of the man who has no particular desire to write the word "Finis" to his life. The gloom of the hollows between the mountains is also alluring in its own ugly way. If this sort of infatuation begins, it is as well to fight it promptly by stirring about. Whisky is regarded an excellent specific against such mania; and if the whisky needs to be adulterated, you may find just below Pen-y-Fan, to the west, two ice-cold springs, which here give the River Taff a start towards the sea. There is further the view, which ought to be a strong distraction. Looking north, east, and west the prospect is extraordinarily mountainous. The town of Brecon nestles in its hollow; but no other town is visible. Thousands of green and brown enclosures indicate the agricultural wealth of this part of Wales, and one dim line above another mark also the different ranges which are so many pencillings of shading on the map. The Black Mountains, east, are the most conspicuous of these masses. They differ much from the Beacons. The latter have strong, separate individuality. The Black Mountains, however, form long, level plateaux, and do not drop to the valleys abruptly.

It is advisable after ascending Pen-y-Fan to tarry in Brecon for a day or two, so as to become quite familiarised with the extent as well as the near presentment of the mountains. The town is far from a bad little place, though torpid to a degree. It contains a priory church that would not disgrace one of the newer cathedral cities; some fragments of a castle; and an old-fashioned hotel which incorporates these fragments in its grounds, and in which you may see enough old-fashioned silver to excite the envy of a new-fashioned millionaire. They talk English in Brecon, which is great gain for an Englishman. There is further the River Usk, spanned by an old bridge, and with a slip of a modern promenade made on its northern bank. Fishing may be enjoyed here gratis, though in droughty days not much can be expected of a mountain stream, comparatively so near its source. By hook or by crook, though, they will get you trout for breakfast at the hotel; and

you may do much worse than eat your trout as some do in Brecknockshire, with fried bacon. In historical and antiquarian matters Brecon is rather more than an average town. Mrs. Siddons was born here in 1755, the house of her nativity being now a commonplace tavern. Brecon's situation is both romantic and healthy. Though it lies in a hole, it is yet some four hundred feet above the Atlantic's level.

A few miles east of Brecon is the lake of Safaddan, known more generally as the Llangorse water. This, too, should be visited for its outlook towards the Beacons. It is a pretty reedy pool, having like other lakes traditions of mammoth pike and perch to lure the angler to spend many placid days on its shining surface. Its shores are charming—green wooded meadows sloping gently to the water, and a spacious reach of common land belonging to Llangorse village and giving the villagers access to the lake. On this common you may see cattle and horses grazing, and at holiday times, groups of picnickers from the coal and iron districts to the south who have come hither in waggonettes. Here, too, you may meet with an accredited boat-owner who will be happy to take you upon the water and assure you that the sport you will have will surprise you.

Llangorse village itself nestles amid trees on the north side of the lake. It is not a fashionable pleasure resort. Its hotels are mere village inns, apt to become very noisy in the evening, when the thirsty Welshmen assemble over their cups and breed arguments which they discuss to the end clamorously, after the Celtic mode. In the white road outside the village children caper and about, or chase the ducks and geese which try periodically to stroll from the little brook into the highway in search of more life than the dwindled watercourse affords them. There is a church at Llangorse and there are two or three chapels; the former-old of foundation, the latter new and ugly, like their brethren elsewhere in the Principality. Any of the Llangorse boys will be charmed to take you up the church tower, whereby you come to a level with the tops of the trees around you. But you do not greatly extend your horizon by the ascent. The Beacons in their majesty are still the dominant features of your landscape. And afterwards you must not grumble if a gentle-faced but imperative little damsel meets you in the aisle and tells you she

is requested by the vicar to draw your attention to a money-box in which you are to put a silver piece or two for the church restoration fund. Strangers in Scotch tweeds cannot be allowed to pass unrequitioned in little Llangorse.

There is a veteran fisherman in the village with whom the angler may, to his profit, make acquaintance. He is not a Welshman, but he has exiled himself in Llangorse for three or four decades. There is no mistaking him. He strolls about the village in dark brown velveteens and blue homespun stockings, conscious that, sooner or later, the enthusiastic angler must seek his society. Old Amor, as his name is, has a reputation as a shot and a fisherman which transcends poor little Llangorse. But though born in Devon, which still holds his affections, he lives on in Llangorse, respected by the Welshmen if not greatly respecting his neighbours in his turn. He lives alone in a white cottage. A widower these many years, he has become something of a misogyny; and as he baits your line afresh for perch, or knocks on the head the six-pound pike you have just landed so deftly—thanks to his capable instructions—he tells you how he proposes to continue living alone for the rest of his days. Though well past three-score and ten, he is hale and sinewy to a marvel, and would, if he wished, readily meet with another wife. For he is not only a handsome old man and strong, but reputed very well-to-do. There never was a man giving fairer promise of growing into a centenarian. If he could have his will, I expect he would choose to die suddenly some day thirty years hence in his boat on the lake on a good fishing day, with the Beacons to the south-west, softly mottled with grey cloud shadows, and just after having taken that leviathan pike which he has so often hooked, and which has always hitherto eluded him.

There are legends about Llangorse Lake or Llyn Safaddan. It will do no harm to recount the most significant of them.

Agos ago there lived a wealthy and attractive lady who was mistress of the water and its verdant surroundings. A poor young man sought her hand and was promptly rejected for his poverty. This rejection set the suitor thinking how he could improve his worldly station. He chose a bad method—nothing less than highway robbery and murder. The man he murdered must have been a purveyor

for one of the district princes, for the fruits of the crime sufficed, at one stroke, to make the murderer opulent. Be that as it may, the youth now sped to the lady of Llyn Safaddan and showed his treasures. But the lady was curious about the change in his affairs, and insisted on knowing this and that about him. Whereupon he confessed all to her. This great proof of his love won her heart, but she enjoined the young rascal first to make his peace with the spirit of the murdered man. At the graveside a voice was heard crying: "Is there no vengeance for innocent blood?" An answer also was heard: "Not until the ninth generation." Then the lady of Llyn Safaddan was satisfied and took the murderer for husband. By some strange means the wedded pair lived on and on until they saw their children and children's children to the ninth generation. Then they thought they might mock at the judgement from the grave, and prepared a banquet for the purpose. But suddenly, when the cups were passing at their feast, there came an earthquake, and the old folks and the young folks all alike disappeared. You may, it is said, see the weathercock of their church in the depths of the lake. Times are, too, when the very bells of the submerged church are to be heard ringing. But it must have been a very low church, for the lake is not generally deep; its weeds, too, have absorbed many a fish-hook. This tale is told in one of the Harleian manuscripts, and is as true, doubtless, as most Welsh legends.

It is difficult to believe anything against the character of Llyn Safaddan on a placid summer day, when the glassy surface of the lake is ruffled only by impetuous gnats, hungry fish, and thirsty swallows. But with low clouds on Mynydd Llangorse to the east, with the Beacons black under the like incubi, and with whistling, stormy winds howling across the lake, this looks steeped in "dire calamity." However, if the pike are taking under these latter conditions, the angler will still laugh Safaddan's grisly tales to scorn. Old Amor, too, will not smoke one pipe the less at such a time. If the wraiths of Llyn Safaddan are of a proud and vengeful kind, they must feel much out of humour with this old Devonian and his contempt for them.

Llyn Safaddan lies in the valley between the Beacons and the Black Mountains. From Llangorse you may gain either heights in a few hours. As a holiday resort, there-

fore, this little village must not be despised.

But for the Beacons no place is better than Brecon town. Three or four days here, especially if you have a bedroom the windows of which look straight at the mountains, will imprint Pen-y-Fan—i.e., "the highest head"—and his neighbour peaks fast in your mind. It is the kind of impression that does one good.

There are several bizarre epitaphs in Brecon Priory churchyard. One on a carpenter and his son, a butcher, may be reproduced:

O earth of earth, observe this well,  
That earth in earth was doomed to dwell,  
Then earth in earth to dust remain,  
That earth in earth must rise again.

I have just given this verse to my little boy, with a request that he will parse it for me. After much ploughing of fingers in his hair and divers exclamations, the lad has rebelled utterly against the task—he believes it to be unparisable. I am not sure that he is not right. However, to this epitaph a line or two might well be added on the advisability of that very concrete form of "earth in earth"—to wit, the tourist—seeing, for his remembrance's sake, as many as possible of the pretty places of "earth on earth," ere he becomes "earth under earth." The Brecon Beacons ought to be included in the list.

### "A RED-FACED NIXON."

READERS of the "Pickwick Papers" will remember the expression rather disrespectfully used by Mr. Samuel Weller to his father, Mr. Tony Weller: "You've been prophesying away, very fine, like a red-faced Nixon," and also Sam's reply to his father's query as to Nixon's identity: "This here gen'l'm'n was a prophet." Perhaps a few particulars regarding the "prophet" in question may not be uninteresting to the general reader.

John, or Jonathan, Nixon, the father of the prophet, was an agriculturist, who had a lease of a farm called "Bark," or "Bridge House," in the parish of Over, near New Church, Delamere, Cheshire; and there Robert Nixon, the prophet, was born on Whit Sunday, 1467, in the reign of Edward the Fourth. From his infancy the future prophet was remarkable for his natural stupidity and astonishing ignorance. It was only with the greatest difficulty that

his parents could instruct him how to drive a horse or tend the cattle.

The parents, at their death, left the farm, and the care of their son Robert, to the future prophet's elder brother; and Robert's first prophecy was not long in being made and fulfilled. As he was driving a team one day, whilst his brother's servant-man was guiding the plough, Robert pricked one of the oxen so very cruelly with the goad, that the man threatened to report the matter to his master. On this Nixon said, "The ox will not be my brother's three days hence." This happened accordingly, for, there being a death in the family, the lord of the manor claimed the ox in question as a "herriet," or acknowledgement, which, by the tenure of some estates, was due to every new lord of the manor.

During his residence on this farm, Nixon was very reserved, and seldom spoke. When he did so, his voice was so harsh and rough that it was difficult to hear properly what he intended to say.

About this time, the Abbot of Vale Royal having displeased Nixon, the latter said, in an angry tone: "When you the harrow come on high, soon a raven's nest will be." This was fulfilled in the person of the last Abbot of that place, whose name was Harrow, and who was summoned before Sir Thomas Holcroft, and put to death for denying the supremacy of King Henry the Eighth. It is a curious fact that Sir Thomas Holcroft and his heirs bore a raven as their crest.

Another prophecy of Nixon's was that "Norton and Vale Royal Abbeys should meet at Oston Bridge," a prediction at the time looked upon as impossible of fulfilment. These two Abbeys were, however, pulled down, and the stones used for building the bridge in question.

Nixon also foretold the Reformation in the following lines:

A time shall come when priests and monks  
Shall have no churches nor houses,  
And places where images stood  
Lined letters shall be good,  
English books thro' churches are spread,  
There shall be no holy bread.

What rendered Nixon most famous as a prophet, however, was that immediately before the battle of Bosworth Field was fought between Richard the Third and Henry the Seventh, he suddenly stopped his team, and, with his whip pointing from one hand to the other, cried aloud: "Now Richard, now Harry," several times, until at last he shouted, "Now, Harry, get over

that ditch and you gain the day." The proclamation of Henry as King of England was brought to the farm, on the following day, by one of the special messengers despatched from Bosworth Field. This messenger, on his return to the army, related the prediction of the King's success which had been made by Nixon, and King Henry, one of the wisest princes of his time, not being willing to be deceived, nor yet to doubt the dispensation of Providence, even by the mouth of a fool, sent the same messenger back to find Nixon, and bring him before him. At the moment the King gave this order, Nixon was in the town of Over, about which he ran like a madman, declaring that the King had sent for him, and that he must go to Court, and there be "clemmed"—that is, starved to death. This declaration occasioned a great deal of laughter in the town, as it was considered to be the height of absurdity to suppose that the King would send for such a dirty, drivelling person as Nixon. Great, therefore, was the surprise when, a few days later, the King's messenger arrived in town in search of the prophet. Nixon, who was acting as turnspit in his brother's house at the time, cried out, just before the arrival of the messenger: "He is coming, he is now on the road for me." The astonishment of the brother and his family may be imagined, when the messenger arrived and demanded Nixon in the King's name. The prophet was at once handed over to the messenger, and hurried away by him, loudly lamenting that he was going to Court to be starved.

On his arrival, the King, being desirous of testing Nixon's powers, hid a valuable ring which he was in the habit of wearing, and caused strict enquiry and search to be made for it throughout the palace. He then sent for Nixon, told him of the loss, and asked his assistance in finding the ring. Nixon's only answer was to quote the old proverb, "He who hides can find." On this, the King declared that he had only put the question to the prophet to try him, and gave orders that Nixon was to be at liberty to range at will through the whole palace; and, to prevent any risk of the starvation that Nixon feared, that he was to frequent the kitchen as much as he pleased. An attendant was also instructed to watch over Nixon, and make sure that he was not neglected or annoyed by any of the servants.

In these circumstances, it seemed very unlikely that want or starvation should

beset the prophet. One day, however, as the King was leaving the palace, intending to spend some days at his hunting quarters, Nixon ran to him, and begged, in the most urgent and moving terms, that he might not be left behind, for that, if he were, His Majesty would never again see him alive, as the present was the appointed time, and he would be starved to death.

The King, deeming such an event impossible, merely commended him specially to the care of the attendant whose duty it was to watch over Nixon, and went on his journey.

Scarcely had the King left, when the servants began to tease and annoy Nixon to such an extent, that the officer, to put an end to these insults, locked him up in a closet, and allowed no one to go near him but himself; as he thought, by this means, to prevent the possibility of the prophecy coming true.

A message of importance, however, having come from the King to this very officer, he, in his haste to obey the Royal command, forgot to set the unfortunate prophet at liberty; and, although he was only three days absent, Nixon, on his return, was found to have died of hunger.

The King was greatly grieved by the event; and, seeing this, the courtiers caused the report to be spread abroad that the prophet had died a natural death.

The following, being the text of some of Nixon's so-called prophecies, may fitly close this paper:

When a raven shall build in a stone lion's mouth,  
On a church top beside the grey forest,  
Then shall a King of England be drove from his  
Crown,  
And return no more.  
When an eagle shall sit on the top of Vale Royal  
house,  
Then shall an heir be born, who shall live to see  
Great troubles in England.  
A boy shall be born with three thumbs on one hand.  
Who shall hold three Kings' horses,  
Whilst England three times won and lost in one day,  
But after this shall be happy days.  
A new set of people of virtuous manners  
Shall live in peace.  
Then shall the Church, and honest men, live still,  
If this church fall upwards against the hill.  
A crow shall sit on the top of the headless cross.  
In the forest so gray,  
And drink of the nobles' gentle blood so free.  
Twenty hundred horses shall want masters  
Till their girls rot under their bellies.  
Thro' our own money and our own men,  
Shall a dreadful war begin;  
Between the sickle and the sick,  
All England shall have a pluck,  
And be several times foresworn,  
And put to their wit's end,  
That it shall not be known, whether to reap their  
corn,  
Bury their dead, or go to field to fight.  
A great scarcity of bread corn.

Between a rick and two trees  
 A famous battle fought shall be;  
 London streets shall run with blood,  
 And at last shall sink,  
 So that it shall be fulfilled,  
 Lincoln was, London is, and York shall be,  
 The finest City of the three.  
 When summer in winter shall come,  
 And peace is made at every man's home,  
 Then shall be danger of war;  
 For though with peace at night the nation ring,  
 Men shall rise to war in the morning.  
 In those days shall be hatred and bloodshed;  
 The father against his son, and the son against his father,  
 That one may have a house for the lifting of the latch of the door.  
 Landlords shall stand  
 With hat in their hand,  
 To desire tenants to hold their land.  
 Then forty pounds in hand  
 Will be better than forty pounds a year in land.  
 Scotland shall stand more or less  
 Till she has brought England to a piteous case.  
 The Scots shall rule England one whole year.  
 Three years of great wars,  
 And in all countries great uproars.  
 The first is terrible, the second worse, but the third unbearable.  
 The bull and the red rose shall stand in strife  
 That shall turn England to much woe,  
 And cause many a man to lose his life.  
 That lion who's forsaken been and forced to flee  
 Shall hear a woman shrilly say,  
 Thy friends are killed on yonder hill,  
 Death to many a knight this day.  
 Between seven, eight, and nine,  
 In England wonders shall be seen;  
 Between nine and thirteen  
 All sorrow shall be done.  
 Then rise up Richard, Richard's son,  
 And bless that happy reign.  
 Thrice happy he, who sees this time to come,  
 When England shall know rest and peace again.

## WHITE LILAC.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

THE first time I ever saw Hilary Montesson must have been about three months after my arrival at Veddas Hall. We were both quite young then, I about nineteen, he still under thirty; yet, strange to say, strong as was the fascination his personality held for me, it never once occurred to me to fall in love with him. Later on, I did, indeed, love him in a protecting, sisterly, almost motherly fashion, but with respect to his life's story, I stood from the outset in the position of spectator.

Well I remember that day of his coming! It was early summer and glorious weather. I ought to have been giving my pupil a music lesson, instead of which I had allowed her to persuade me—I was not very firm in those days—to saunter with her down through the orchard towards the river. There, amidst snowy showers of

cherry blossoms and rosy-tipped clouds of apple-blossom petals, he came upon us unexpectedly. Taller than most men, eminently graceful in his every movement, with what a courtly inclination did he introduce himself! I remember that I thought at once of the Knights of the Round Table, as seen in Tennyson's *Idylls*, and curiously enough—as I found out afterwards—so also did my young pupil.

We turned back towards the house, for he had come, of course, to see Sir Digby, and had merely strayed in seeking for a short cut. Very pleasantly he discoursed the while. The clear, clarion-like ring was in his voice just as much in these early days as later when all London talked of it—his supporters with enthusiasm, his political opponents with sneers—as who should say, he carries his hearers by the music of his tones, a trick of oratory—when novelists made it an attribute of their heroes, and University men in their Unions imitated it.

For the rest, as I recollect them now, there was a good deal of sentiment and youthful enthusiasm in his words. He had most unwillingly, he said, run through from town, for the press of work was great and even a few hours just then precious. But now that he had spent a morning in the pure air, amidst the sights and sounds of Heaven's beautiful creation, it seemed as if it would be blasphemy to voluntarily shut himself up again in smoky London, that unlovely workshop of man. "We call what we have there life, and say there is none elsewhere, but it is you here in this paradise of growing green things that taste the joy of living. Why do I not free myself from it all? I suppose because I cannot, because the fever has entered my veins, the ambition fumes my brain, but some time, perhaps, some time"—he drew a long breath—"when the fever has gone out from me, I shall come back here to die."

We smiled, my pupil and I, at the serious way in which he spoke. I believe we would have smiled at almost anything in those days.

"Shall you never come again before then?" Aurora ventured.

He turned to her, and for the first time, as it seemed to me, noticed the child's great beauty.

"Yes, if you ask me to," he said softly, placing all the accent on the "you," and then we walked on in silence.

"Who was Adonis, Miss Athie?" my

little girl asked me as soon as he had passed into the library and we were left to ourselves.

"Adonis, child! Why do you wish to know?"

"Because I have noticed when people speak of Adonis or an Adonis they mean some very splendid-looking or beautiful person."

"Yes, quite true."

"And so—and so, Miss Athie, that is the name I mean to give to Mr. Montesson, unless, perhaps, we ought to call him Sir Galahad."

The child, I saw, was rambling in her talk, and, like me, had stumbled upon Tennyson's *Idylls*. I took little notice, however, of her words at the moment, following out rather my own thoughts. It was only some time after that I started up with a shock and an inward shiver, for that, in the midst of blossoming fruit-trees, dancing sunbeams, and sparkling, rippling river wavelets, these words of Shelley—suggested no doubt by my pupil's childish ramblings—were echoing persistently in my ears: "Oh weep for Adonais—he is dead!"

That evening, before Hilary Montesson left us, Aurora presented him with a bouquet culled by her own fair hands. Great clusters of fragrant white lilac sparkling with raindrops—for the afternoon had brought a thunder-shower—blue-eyed forget-me-nots, lilies of the valley in their angel purity, their heads modestly bowed on graceful curving stems. There were a couple of sentences about the white lilac in an article of Montesson's which appeared shortly after this, and which showed, I think, that my fair young pupil had not been immediately forgotten in the heat and bustle of that London strife which pressed so hard upon him. The article in question dealt with the hardships of the professional florist, and the allusion to lilac blossom can scarcely be called relevant. "To my mind," he says, "it is emblematic of a maiden wondrous fair, in the dim future a bride to be, girt about with the white robes of innocence and standing on the margin of the world's flowery paths. She does not dream of the thorns and the jagged stones any more than we, gazing upon these delicate star-cut flowerets, can call to mind the blustering, blighting blasts of December." So he wrote, and then for eight long years we saw no more of him.

After a prolonged illness, during which, in his search for health, he drew us with

him over all civilised Europe, Sir Digby died. "Anywhere but Britain" had been his motto, and to everywhere but Britain we went. Aurora's education was pursued under the most changing conditions. A little French art in Paris, a scrap of Italian in Rome, wood-carving in Switzerland, an initiation into the different systems of nearly all the musical conservatoriums, and a surprisingly wide range of languages—that was pretty much what her seven years of travel had given her. She was twenty-one years of age by that time, mistress of herself; of that fine old pile, Veddas Hall; and of the large accompanying estates.

Very quietly we settled down in the old home. I had left it a governess, I came back in the capacity of companion—permanent companion as Aurora would have it, though in my own mind I had little doubt that my stay would be a short one. She was indeed now "wondrous fair." I do not know that I have anywhere in picture or in life seen a more perfect face. Glorious dark eyes with long-lashed, drooping lids; a complexion such as the French novelists compare, not inaptly, to creamy satin; and the sweetest, most charming expression imaginable. What marvel if all men and most women paid homage to youth and beauty in her person?

It was not until we had been home a year and more, however, that Aurora began, and that only by degrees, to show herself in the great world. In the meantime, with regard to Hilary Montesson, I learnt that his ambition and his talents combined had already carried him far. Versatile and many-sided was his genius, numerous and varied his achievements. He had, as I found, been appointed to some scientific professorship in Oxford; had been offered and had refused an important Government post in order that he might pursue untrammelled his brilliant Parliamentary career; and had, in the intervals of his hard work, written and published several books on such diverse subjects as the future of electricity, the final "e" in Chaucer, and fairyland for the babies. There was some talk—I saw this in hints in the society papers—of a great friendship, to call it by no warmer name, which he had contracted for a certain well-known successful and beautiful concert singer, and which, it appeared, led him occasionally into somewhat anomalous positions. At any rate, with the unsparing treatment generally accorded to the weaknesses of great men, they led the public to believe



that a glance from the syren's eyes was of more account to the eminent politician than any number of constituents' votes, and that a very little persuasion might induce him to turn aside from his dazzling prospects and take up the humble rôle of secretary or avant-courier to Madame Kara. There was a further insinuation, however, that his suit was not favoured more than that of many others by the capricious cantatrice; and that, if she did stretch out her little finger to him occasionally, it was only that it pleased her to have a following of conquests—"to grace in captive bonds her chariot wheels."

I do not know if Aurora ever read anything of all this, but on the very first occasion on which she met Hilary Montesson she became fully cognisant of it. It was at a charity concert given in the large ball-room of a ducal residence in London. We had listened to several songs and recitations, but it was only when the Russian, Madame Kara, came forward that simultaneously the tall, graceful, still-remembered figure of Montesson appeared to us at the side of the hall, leaning carelessly against a stand of massive gilt candelabra. It did not require any previous knowledge of the situation to discern that his whole attention was given to the singer, that his keen blue eyes were gleaming with a something, which, if it was not passion, might well have passed for it, a great all-absorbing fascination. He stepped quickly forward when the music ceased, and handed her a magnificent bouquet of hothouse flowers; but it was evidently not one of Madame's complacent days, for she took it from him with a scarcely veiled impatience and almost immediately flung it carelessly on the end of the piano.

We did not have an opportunity of speaking to Montesson on that occasion; and beyond asking me if I had recognised him, Aurora made no mention of the scene afterwards. As we drove through the park to her grand-aunt's house, where we were staying at the time, we were even unusually silent, I pondering on the harder, firmer lines which eight years had drawn in the face of the "Knight"—one of the titles with which so long ago my pupil had dubbed him—and the marvel of Aurora's instantly remembering him, though she had been but a child when last they met. She, meanwhile, was gazing persistently out upon the equestrians who just then crowded the Row; so that only when we reached home did I notice the look of feverish excitement in her dark grey eyes.

"You are not ill, dearest?" I asked anxiously, as I followed her upstairs.

"Oh, no, Miss Athie dear," she answered, smiling in her own sweet, enigmatical way. "I have only caught hold of a new idea." And with that vague indication I had to be satisfied.

## CHAPTER II.

MANY times after this we met Hilary Montesson. Our visit to town, which was to have been a short one, stretched out indefinitely. There was always some new engagement offering, some fresh attraction rendering it difficult for us to tear ourselves away. Montesson's life, as I have said, was a crowded one; but either out of gratitude for what Sir Digby had done for him in days past, or because, as it seemed to me, it pleased him to pilot one so young and ingenuous as Aurora through the shallows and quicksands of London society, he managed to steal from duty many pleasant hours and half-hours at that time. As for me, it was long before any presentiment of danger to one or other occurred to me. I, personally, had always from the first felt a boundless admiration for the mere virile power in this man's intellect and character, but I had no reason to suppose that my young charge was in like manner affected by it; and with regard to Montesson, had I not the evidence of my senses to assure me that another—alas! as I feared, unworthily—claimed his entire devotion? So we met, not once nor twice, but constantly, forming together a pleasant trio at entertainments, concerts, or private views, gaily interchanging ideas on whatever topic came uppermost, and, but for the inevitable staring to which we were subjected, thoroughly enjoying ourselves.

I say, to which we were subjected, but, of course, I mean these two. In any assemblage which included the talent and the élite of London society, Montesson was a marked man. His tall figure, easy, unstudied bearing, and strong face—so full of fire and intellect, and yet, too, of urbanity and courtesy—made it instantly matter of note, even in a crowded company, that one celebrity at least was gracing it with his presence. And from him to glance at Aurora, so fair, so lovable, and lovely, endowed besides with an entire freedom from self-consciousness which was not the least of her charms, was only the natural impulse of every new arrival

interested in coming across a man who in so few years had risen so high.

During all this time we never met Madame Kara, never mentioned her name. She was, I knew, one of those professionals, eminent and of good report, who are received everywhere; and I therefore concluded—and rightly—that she had left England, though even the society papers were silent as to her whereabouts.

At last, however, the day was fixed for our return to Veddas; and as old Mrs. Cholmondelay was to follow us—immediate change of air, as she declared, being imperative for her health—it seemed as if no further delay were possible. Then it was that I noticed how keenly Aurora felt having to leave town. On the night preceding our departure, there was a great reception at the Marchioness of Whattleberry's to which we had been invited, and which we were to attend under the wing of a Mrs. Hardeelow, who usually chaperoned us when Mrs. Cholmondelay did not feel well enough to go out. This arrangement was confined, of course, to specially important gatherings, my own surveillance being considered sufficient for the small and earlier. Before dinner Aurora came to my room, attired in the white robes which she invariably wore, and which suited her so well. She held in her hand a large box, from which a delicious fragrance was speedily exhaled.

"I have brought you my flowers, Miss Athie," she said. "I am sure you can fix them for me so much better than I could do it myself. And you know"—a sigh—"it is for the very last time."

"Yes, the very last," I answered, laughing. "How delightful dear old Veddas will be after all the knocking about! My child!" I added in dismay, laying hold of one lovely bare elbow, "these cannot be tears, surely?"

But they were tears. One by one they trickled from beneath the dark lashes, while Aurora, in a vain attempt to conceal them, bent over her box of flowers. I observed that they were not at all like the ordinary consignment from the Hall.

"You have been buying flowers, dearest?" I asked her.

"Oh, no, Miss Athie, these—these were ordered from Mentone. They are brick-red anemones, the colour Macintosh has never had yet at Veddas—just like those in the picture of the flower girl we saw on Saturday at the gallery."

"And you ordered these? But there has been no time since Saturday."

"Oh, yes, indeed; Mr. Montesson said then that he could get them for me. He telegraphed the order, you know."

I had guessed as much. It was Hilary Montesson. I who had been so absurdly blind became of a sudden just as abnormally clear-sighted. He had won Aurora's heart. She would be to him, no doubt, a beautiful child, a quaintly pretty picture, a pleasing diversion in the intervals of his literary labours, of his long Parliamentary sittings, and in the absence of Madame Kara. An irresistible longing to help my little girl at this late hour, to prepare her for the blow which I believed must fall upon her, prompted me to venture on a word of warning.

"Mr. Montesson," I said, "seems to be a connoisseur in flowers. Do you remember, the first time we saw him this season, what a lovely bouquet he was presenting to that singer?"

Instantly she divined my purpose, and raising her moist eyes, fixed them like liquid stars on mine in a mute, beseeching gaze. So I said no more, merely proceeding to arrange the graceful anemones upon her shoulder.

Later on, at the reception, viewing our movements at last with seeing eyes, I observed that all went well. Hilary Montesson joined us very early and kept near us almost till the end. He had a happy knack of drawing back when others came forward, and yet of utilising every moment between these mutual interchanges. As for himself, I noticed that he smilingly but firmly resisted all inducements to betake himself elsewhere, all the attempts—and they were many—made upon his freedom of action.

"Do you not know," somebody said to him at last, "why we are all flocking towards the Bronze Room? It is Madame Kara who has dropped down upon us again from the clouds, and is to give us the latest seraph ditty."

He passed on, and Montesson turned his face towards us.

"Let us get out of this crush," he whispered. "Take the door to the left, Miss Atherton, and we shall follow." Then, as we crossed the main reception-room: "I am quite sure that for Miss Veddas, for both of you, the heat in the Bronze Chamber would be overpowering. We shall be able to see that Alma Tadema I spoke of in the gallery now, without being jostled at every moment, and you must let me fetch some cup or some ices."

Mrs. Hardelow we had long since lost sight of. She had, indeed, as I found afterwards, gone away with our hostess to welcome Madame Kara and ascertain what she purposed to sing, so that Mr. Montesson was free to lead us where he chose. Very ably he expounded to us the beauties of the painting in question, the delicate finish, exquisite colouring, and marvellous strength of detail; while through it all I kept wondering, wondering, weighed down by my new-born sense of responsibility, as to the right interpretation to be placed on his apparently indifferent attitude towards the great singer.

Notwithstanding our distance from the concert-room, occasional snatches of melody penetrated to where we were; while the burst of applause, brava, and encores, testified to the appreciativeness of the audience. Aurora, a trifle paler than usual, I thought, was leaning against an ebon pedestal which supported a bust of Marie Antoinette, and alongside of her, from a tall china jar, there stretched flowering branches of white lilac—her very own emblem of Montesson's choosing. I think some recollection of this must have come to him when at last he caught sight of it, for he asked her whether she thought the lilacs at Veddass would yet be in flower.

"Will you not come and see?" asked Aurora shyly.

He hesitated in evident surprise.

"We expect Mrs. Cholmondelay, my aunt, next week," she explained, "and Mrs. Hardelow is bringing a party on Wednesday. We shall be quite a large household. Could you not spare us a day or two?"

Before he had time to reply Madame Kara and an extensive following burst into the gallery.

"Ah, at last we have found him!" she exclaimed, awakening the echoes with her deep, resonant voice. Then, when she had come up alongside of him: "Montesson," she said, hitting his shoulder playfully

with the mother-of-pearl handle of her fan, "do you know that you have been very wicked to-night? Why did you not come to help me in the concert-room?"

A perfect babble of reproaches buzzed around Madame upon this from the young men who had been making themselves useful, and whose services she seemed inclined to overlook; and in the midst of these, Montesson turned round, and by the faintest gesture motioned me to take Aurora out of the way. As we passed through the drawing-room, looking about for Mrs. Hardelow, I could hear his voice, clear and ringing as ever, raised in laughing expostulation with Madame.

Aurora, poor child, now of a sudden resembling overmuch the emblematic lilac, in that she seemed drooping and crushed in the hot air and crowded rooms, begged me most earnestly to take her home with or without our chaperon. By the help of a footman we speedily found Mrs. Hardelow, however, and a very few minutes later had secured our cloaks and were standing in the hall awaiting the announcement of the carriage. I was feeling troubled and depressed, and my thoughts had wandered I know not exactly whither, when I looked up with a start to find that Hilary Montesson had joined us and was bending down to speak to Aurora.

"You really meant it?" I heard him say. "You will make me welcome in your own beautiful Veddass?"

"If you will come."

"If! Is it likely that I would miss such a chance as that? And have you forgotten—ah, yes, you have long since forgotten!—the promise I once made to a child, a 'mädchen wunderschön,' in the old garden at Veddass? Believe me," he added emphatically, "I would come though a thousand obstacles were thrown in my way."

And as he escorted us down the steps, I remembered with infinite relief that I had been right about his voice—the passionate thrill was reserved for Aurora.

Next Week will be commenced a new SERIAL STORY by

MRS. R. S. DE COURCEY LAFFAN,

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," "A Garrison Romance," "Louis Draycott," etc., etc.,

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## THROUGH THE RANKS.

And will be continued from week to week until completed.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE MISADVENTURE OF ENSIGN GREEN.

A WORLD of promise. Buds everywhere, and a concert of bird-voices; loud, sweet, jubilant, expectant.

The incoming of summer in the south of Ireland is, of all climates, countries, or epochs, the sweetest and the best. I have seen many lands—America, hurrying on her spring robe as if she had not a moment to lose; the same fair land in its gorgeously dyed autumn dress, making of death a glory; the calm, transparent waters of more sunny climes still, reflecting the white, perfumed load of blossom on the orange-trees, and the marble walls of vast palaces, whose very shadows have a grandeur and magnificence all their own, as they lie sleeping under the silver moonlight.

I have seen these things, and others like unto them; but naught fairer on the face of this beautiful world, than the early days of summer on the banks of lovely Lea.

How the boughs—newly decked in every exquisite shade of fresh young green—bend to touch the water as it passes, giving it unostentatiously of their own beauty by making it their tiring-mirror! How loud the chaffinch cries, "cheep! cheep!" how the thrushes laugh and gurgle in the wood, and on what black, majestic wing the hooded crow sails overhead, bearing his bit of stick or shred of moss to add

to his yearling home, and make it fit and seemly for the voracious brood who soon shall gape and gobble in their wind-rocked home!

Nature's concerted harmonies know no discord—the rush of the river, the bleat of the lamb, the shrill pipe of the black-bird, the "lowing of the cattle on the lea," the rustle of the gently stirring branches, even the gobble of the greedy rooklets, all have their place in one vast choir that ne'er gets out of tune—and nowhere can you better listen to the many voices of awaking nature than in that green island of the sea, whose bosom is ever torn with anarchy and dissension, yet who wins—and wins for ever—the heart of the Sas-senach who dwells amid her beauty, and learns by heart the lesson of her loving tenderness.

Over all there is a sunshine that warms yet never scorches, and the ambient air buffets your cheek with touch as velvet soft as that of a baby's palm. Yet it is a softness that does not enervate. It fills your heart with hope, and brings to light your best energies. Life seems to be a gift unspeakable, and—together with all created things around you—you are happy only just to live.

Above the valley from which the bells of Shandon ring out so sweet and clear, there is a hill, from which the fair city of Cork may be seen to rare perfection. There lies the river, its sparkling waters spanned by St. Patrick's Bridge. The wide streets with tall buildings on either hand, stretch out in a far-lying vista. The stream of life runs gaily on. With the deep blue sky above it, and the river running through its midst, Cork—seen from a distance—has much of the air of a foreign city. Nor does the character of her citizens belie this

resemblance. Easily moved alike to tears or laughter, to passionate sorrow or light-hearted merriment, is the Celtic nature. Ardent to love, hot to resent, vindictive to revenge; beyond the power of reason when roused to animosity, or smarting under a sense of wrong; capable of an intensity of devotion, ready with a generous sympathy to all in misfortune—what a strange, faulty, yet loveable bundle of characteristics goes to make up your southern Irish man or woman!

But it is not with the Celt, but with the Sassenach we have now to deal. Our story must no longer go on halting feet, but hasten on and tell its tale without more lingering by the river with its countless tints of beauty borrowed from the verdure overhead, or lagging to listen to the lilt of a thousand birds beneath the turquoise sky.

That no charm may be lacking to the kingly day upon which our story opens, music is making merry all the sunlit air. It is music of the most stirring kind—the clash and clang of a military band. People coming up Patrick's Hill unconsciously fall into step with the rhythm of it, turning into amateur soldiers for the time being. A child, letting go its nurse's hand, dances, laughing, to the sound; and a beggar, sitting by the roadside, laughs too, amid her rage and squalor, as she looks on. The tune they play is "Johnny comes marching home"; as you listen you are glad that Johnny did come marching home, though you don't know who he was, or what astounding feats of arms he had been performing. These inspiring strains come from the barrack yard, and you, passing by that way, think, perhaps, what a merry life a soldier leads in times of peace, and what a blessing he ought to be to his country, and how ready and willing to go and be shot in your defence in times of war.

Just as you reach the bottom of the hill, the music stops suddenly, and the silence hurts your ears and somehow spoils the beauty and brightness of the day, making it a thing that has lost something of its perfection.

We—who have magic shoes upon our feet that make us invisible and take us where we will—will pass through the heavy closed doors of the barrack square, and make one of the company gathered within. The whole strength of the Line regiment at present lying in these barracks is gathered together as for some high

festival, drawn up in square, with the band—now silent—in the centre, but just a little to one side, so as to give room and space for an odd-looking erection that stands right in the middle of the cube of red-coated men. It is of triangular form, and ropes lie coiled upon the ground at either side of it.

Hard by, with a nine-lashed scourge in his hand, stands a drummer, waiting the orders of the officer in command. Upon this man's face is a portentous gravity that would be reluctance, but for that iron hand of discipline that holds tight and fast the will of every man who has once taken the Queen's shilling.

Whatever Drummer Coghlan may think or feel about the matter, it is his duty this day to lash the naked shoulders of Private Deacon, number ten company, with fifty stripes, unless the said Private Deacon, number ten company, shall so faint or fall during the infliction of the said stripes, that the surgeon of the regiment—standing near in full uniform, and looking as calm and stolid as he would do if he were succouring a wounded man under fire, or keeping vigil in the ward of a cholera hospital—shall, in the discharge of his duty, order the remittance of further punishment. Hard by the triangle stands Private Deacon. He is a strong, muscular young fellow, with a face that has doubtless been a mother's and a sweetheart's pride. There is no cowardice in his attitude; no craven fear shown on eye or lip; but a resolute hatred of all those around him seems to burn in his dark eyes, and, if he trembles, it is with passion, not with dread.

Some kindly comrade has slipped a bullet into his hand, unperceived, so that he may clench it hard between his teeth as stripe follows stripe, and pain swells into agony. But Private Deacon scorns this well-intentioned help, and the bullet drops upon the ground.

An order is given, and the criminal is stripped, or rather strips himself to the waist; the collar is strapped about his throat to prevent laceration of the muscles of the neck; and then he is bent against the triangle, his ankles and wrists are bound tightly to the various uprights, and the surgeon takes a step forward so as to have a clear view of the culprit's face. If the lips turn livid, and the eyes dull and dim, then the punishment must be stopped.

The Colonel gives a glance at the band to

make sure that the drums are ready to beat and roll should the sufferer cry out in his pain; the man who holds the scourge takes up his stand at a convenient distance from the whipping-post.

All is ready, and the flail will whirl through the air and make its first mark upon the quivering flesh when once the word is given. But there is a moment's delay.

Of late it has been whispered in the one hundred and ninety-third that the drummers have been lax in their duty on flogging parade. It has been said that the men get off too easily; that there has been collusion somehow between the victim and the executioner.

So the Adjutant, stepping to the side of Drummer Coghlan, says in an undertone—which, however, all the men manage to hear—"Lay it well on."

Now this Adjutant is a man hated by the men and distrusted by the officers. It is but just now he has brought sorrow and shame into the home of humble folk, and made a jest of his success at the mess table. He speaks to a soldier rather less civilly than he would to a dog; he helps to "pluck" unsophisticated youngsters, newly joined; he is bad all round, and every man in the regiment knows it; but he is, on this occasion, in authority, and must be obeyed. With what alacrity Drummer Coghlan would bring the lash down on the Adjutant's back, with what delight he would "lay it well on," is a secret locked in that wooden-faced man's heart; with what delight the regiment would form in square to see him do it, he thinks with a grin that has to be promptly repressed as he lifts the stem of the cat and makes a livid ridge across Private Deacon's shoulder-blades with the lithe, strong lashes.

To have to thrash your comrade like a dog is a very unpleasant duty, no one can deny that, but it comes in the way of military rule and discipline; therefore, to the mind of Drummer Coghlan it is a thing to be faced with a firm front, exactly as you would face the enemy in battle. If you don't like being a soldier, why, get your "kin" to buy you out and be a "blooming civilian"; but if you are a soldier, then take it as it comes, the bad with the good, the sad and sorry with the things that are blithe and gay.

The worthy drummer may have his opinion as to the disorderly conduct of

Private Deacon deserving or not deserving the lash, but that has nothing at all to do with his carrying out the sentence of the court-martial that sat upon the offender. The drum-major counts the strokes as they fall: "One—two—three—four." The blood spurts and oozes, the face of Private Deacon is white, his hands, blue with the pressure of the ropes, are clenched tight, so that it seems the nails must surely pierce the palms. But no cry, not even a moan comes from his lips. And the measured rise, and swirl, and fall of the lash goes on, not, however, uninterrupted. There is a sudden wavering in the ranks gathered on the left of the commanding officer, a staggering step forward from the line, and Ensign Green falls with a dull thud flat upon his face. The young man in question has a remarkably long nose, and the barrack square is cruelly hard; the result of these combined circumstances is disastrous, blood flows freely as ready hands raise the boy—for, indeed, he is little more—and open the collar of his tunic.

Ensign Green at this opens his eyes, and stares glassily at the world, of which all he can see clearly is a scarlet line that dances up and down in a perfectly ridiculous manner, and a gravelly expanse that has waves in it, like the sea in a chopping wind.

Ensign Green is a very fresh and newly-captained warrior. He has lately joined with all the things his mother and sisters marked and packed so neatly in various new portmanteaux, with a patent bath, warranted to expand to enormous dimensions almost at a touch, and could be packed, as the manufacturer declared, "anywheres," or "nowheres," and with a dark shade at each corner of his upper lip, which there is every reason to suppose he looked upon in the light of a moustache.

Mr. Green's father had thought himself very lucky in buying "dear Edward" a commission in the one hundred and ninety-third regiment, and all the Green family held their heads very much higher than they had ever done before when the happy youth was gazetted.

From these particulars will be seen two things—first, that Ensign Green was a young and tender plant; secondly, that I am writing of the long ago—when commissions were things to be bought—when ensigns existed, and sub-lieutenants were not; and when we flogged our soldiers to make them love their Queen and country,

and fight for both with zest and courage. Never before had Edward Pouncefort Green, gentleman, seen such a sight as that which greeted his eyes on the lovely summer's morn already described; never had he seen a human creature treated worse than a dog; humiliated and tortured before his fellow-men, as in these days—thank Heaven!—no man who wears the Queen's uniform can be.

The sight was new to him, and it disagreed with him.

Indeed, we have left him too long staring with a sickly smile at the ranks opposite, and leaning heavily against the knee of the colour-sergeant of his company.

The Colonel, who sits his horse in such a motionless and stony attitude that he looks like an equestrian statue, is not unaware of the disturbance on his left.

"Take him to his quarters," he says curtly, though not unkindly, making the very slightest gesture with his hand towards the subaltern who has taken up so unsoldierly a position upon the gravel, and whose shako has fallen from his head and rolled a foot or two into the square. And so—the while the lash still rises, swirls, and falls with regular, unswerving aim—Ensign Green is supported to his room hard by, the ranks opening to let him pass, and closing after him.

It is the newly-made Colour-Sergeant of number one company who leads him, wavering on his long, spindle legs, and still staring feebly at things in general, to the shelter of his quarters; lays him gently down upon the little new camp bed that creaks so painfully, but is comfortable enough as long as you lie still in it; and then, with fingers as deft as those of a woman, bathes the bruised face with cold water, and searches for and finds the brandy-flask that 'Uncle Dick' gave his nephew as a useful thing to take into action and have ready—in case of accidents—on the field of battle.

"There, sir—you are better now," said the sergeant, looking down upon the prostrate warrior from the altitude of his own stalwart inches, and stroking down his heavy, sweeping moustache to cover a lurking smile that would curl the corners of his mouth.

"It was the—the—heat," said Ensign Green; "and my collar's a thought too tight—must get my fellow to have it seen to."

"Just so, sir," answered the sergeant, with an air of childlike faith in these facts;

"there's nothing worse than a tight collar.' Then he added after a moment's hesitation, "As you feel pretty comfortable, perhaps I had better fall in again!"

The officer nodded; the Colour-Sergeant saluted, and walked slowly away.

Perhaps he was not sorry to have missed the end of Private Deacon's punishment drill.

## ACROSS A CORNER IN ESSEX.

THERE is a briny whiff in the breeze that blows so freshly on the hill, and whistles in the shrouds of the tall flagstaff that is planted on the ivy-covered tower of old Leigh Church. Beneath us the broad estuary of the Thames is spread out—shallows and sands, and dusky mud-flats, and bright channels winding through, and fishing-boats and yachts afloat and aground, the dark steamers pushing along in the main channel, and beyond, the white forts of Sheerness showing in a stray blink of sunshine. And here in the quiet churchyard lie aground the stout old sea captains and pilots of other days—men who fought the Spanish Don on sea and land, or later on, the Dutch, like Captain Rogers of the "Unicorn," whose tablet records how he carried himself magnanimously in three general engagements.

And there are fine old tombs in the churchyard that have braved the foul weather of more than two centuries, and still show legible inscriptions such as this, that tells how "in the hope of a joyfull Resurrection" sleeps below "Captain William Goodlad, chief Commander of the Grenland Fleet xxx years and master of the Trinity House in Anno 1638":

A worthy Able Seaman well Approvde  
Just unto all, and of all well Belovd  
With givets of Grace he was Repleat so Ample  
He lived and died a Patterne and Example.

There are memorials in plenty of the old seafaring stock, pilots, fishermen, fighting seamen, or bold buccanniers in turn, some of whom rose to honour and distinction as Admirals in gold lace, knights and baronets, while others stuck to the lugger and the smack; and the descendants of either are perhaps to be found at this day, sauntering on the wharf down below among cockle-shells and fish-baskets, and waiting for the tide that will carry them to their night's fishing.

From the churchyard a flight of steps and a lane that is as steep as the side of a

house lead down to the old town, where the High Street smells strongly of brine, and fish, and seaweed, and which ends in a row of wooden cabins, each with its furnace and copper, the use of which is shown by the great heaps of cockle-shells that lie outside—heaps that never disappear, however often they may be carted away, for the industrious men in blue jerseys are continually shovelling fresh supplies out of the window. To clear away the cockle-shells from Leigh would be a task to keep the most stirring of evil spirits well employed, as an alternative to weaving ropes of sand or clearing the sea beach of pebbles.

Beyond the cockle houses a rough track continues among channels and flats, where old boats are cast ashore to rot, and a rusty old steam launch is lying high and dry, and presently stops in a farmyard, so mixed are the occupations of this amphibious shore. A stile shows the way across the railway line, and the track is taken up on the other side, with here a pleasant bit of rough pasture, and there a tidal water-course, with a rough plank laid across it, and further on a morsel of tramway, that lands us on a grassy bank, scored with foot-tracks, which rises by a gentle ascent to the very gateway of Hadleigh Castle.

One can't help fancying a great gateway there between those noble towers with warders pacing to and fro, and fishermen going up with their baskets, and mules with jingling bells, and a train of black-robed monks, or a band of gleemen in bright parti-coloured garments. Forth rides a gay cavalcade, hawk on wrist and hound in leash, and all the waiting crowd uncover reverently, for the lord of the castle is the chief man of the realm, and the fair lady, his wife, is a Scottish Princess and near akin to England's Queen. Below, in the haven under the hill, lie the great Earl's galleys, with their silken streamers and gilded prows, and the river sweeps past within a bowshot, where rich carracks sail by on the flood, laden with the wines of Gascony, or the costly wares of Ypres or Ghent. Such might have been the scene in the days of Hubert de Burgh, the builder of the proud castle whose towers, still grand in ruin and decay, attract the compassionate notice of the railway excursionist.

The river has deserted its ancient course, and now its main channel runs miles away from the old castle. But probably when

it was built it commanded from its abrupt heights the chief fairway of the river, and perhaps was intended as a bridle on the stirring citizens of London, between whom and De Burgh there was pretty constant feud. He nipped them at Westminster, where he had a seat on the site of the present Whitehall; he gripped them at Hadleigh, where all their ships must pass; but eventually the City was too strong for the lord, for thus we may read the strange obscure story of the great Earl's disgrace and misfortunes.

The two great flanking towers, whose wonderful masonry has defied the storms of more than six centuries, broken and ruined as they are, show boldly over the rough bushes and broken ground of the hill, but within the encinte of the walls little else has been spared. The place must have been for centuries a convenient quarry for all the neighbourhood, and yet the query of a casual excursionist seems pertinent enough: "What have they done with the old 'uns?" They did not build Hadleigh Church with them, anyhow. We reach the village by a long narrow lane, not innocent of mud, passing among the buildings of the Salvation Army farm colony, where a number of "submerged" workmen are busy in mending wheels and other gear, with an "officer" looking on, and we find there an interesting little Norman church, probably older than the castle, with a characteristic circular apse.

But for a few new houses rising here and there, and a street or two in embryo running into the ploughed fields, the houses represented by numbered wooden pegs, Hadleigh village, with quaint old cottages and a modest array of shops, has suffered no great change in the metropolitan invasion. The old lady who sells ginger-beer "don't see much difference" in the place from what it used to be. She invites us into her neat little parlour crammed with old-fashioned furniture, and with a few old-fashioned oil paintings on the walls, by some village "little master" of the early days of the century. There is the old squire who sits smoking his pipe by his broad, open kitchen hearth, and the village "softie," who regards his patron respectfully from the other side; and another canvas represents the village cobbler crouched in his stall with some other village "character," who stands grinning at the side. The pictures, says the old lady, were a legacy from her old master who died thirty-seven years ago, and they



weren't painted for him, but for his father belike. And thus the old farmer squire comes into view, with his jester the softie, his court painter, and perhaps with his poet also, to take a share in the great jug of home-brewed.

Still the old lady "don't see much difference." The outside world is represented to her by "breaks" from Southend and bicycles—from anywhere. But the "breaks" "don't get no furdur than the public-house," and the cycles "runs on to Rayleigh, they don't stop here." And the old lady's ginger-beer, which she produces from some dim receptacle in the thickness of the wall, is deliciously cool, and the honest body ransacks the house to find a half-penny for change. "Don't matter! But it do matter; I ain't going to charge you more than I oughter." And she would doubtless lock the door rather than let her guests depart without their due.

The respectful way in which the village people speak of Rayleigh, as of a centre like Rome to which all roads lead, suggests a visit to the place. But that is for another day, when we make Benfleet our starting-place.

There on the hythe, where, perhaps, Hasting, the Danish chief, landed his braves in the dim days of old, a number of barges are landing some very unsavoury cargo. It is "sauve qui peut" from the little railway station, but the fresh breeze dispels the evil odours, and the village, nestled in a nook of the hill, is as neat and pretty as a village can be. An artist has set up his easel by the roadside, and is sketching a red-roofed cottage with a wealth of greenery behind it; apple, and plum, and pear-trees, all well loaded with fruit. Down the lane lies the church, which rewards a visit by the sight of a charming old porch in beautifully carved oak, and probably of the same age as the nave of the church, which is of the sixteenth century, while the chancel arch is some ages earlier. A little spiral staircase in the north wall is a curious feature, as it leads nowhere now, but once probably gave access to the flat roof of the aisle. But why, at a period when ladders were not unknown? Our archæologist suggests, perhaps, for the Ascension Day celebration when—as still at Magdalen, Oxford—the singers ascended to the roof and chanted an appropriate anthem. Again there are the corbels of the nave that once helped to support a handsome open timber roof, carved by some

humorist in stone with the happiest grotesqueness.

But again up the village to find the street fining off into a pleasant field-path through meadows which, after recent rains, are covered with a thick carpet of the richest verdure. And as the path winds higher and higher, so from over the broad estuary dotted with sails, hills rise over hills on the pleasant Kentish coast, the dim line stretching far inland to the purple downs above Sevenoaks. The field-path is all too short, and brings us into the road again, but at the top of the hill; and a little further on is a pleasant little "restauration," a cottage in the midst of a garden, that to an East End dweller must appear a perfect Eden. Here another elderly lady dispenses light refreshments, surrounded by a country solitude that you would think could hardly be prolific in customers. But our good dame is acquainted with affairs. School treats come this way at times, and pleasure-parties by the score; there is a wood hard by to ramble in, and a pleasant country round about. But we are in the right way for Rayleigh. "Follar the wires, them will lead you straight to Rayleigh," cheerily cries the elderly gentleman who takes the part of the grand old gardener in this little Eden. Yet it is rather discouraging to have to follow the wires for four miles or so on end; and we look out for field-paths, and there are some that look very inviting, but lead in the wrong direction. But although the sight of a row of telegraph poles destroys some part of the charm of the country, the road is pleasant enough, and there is refreshment by the way in the shape of blackberries, that hang from the hedges in profusion, and that nobody cares to gather. Some one of the party who is always seeking for the reasons of things, says that the blackberries are spared because in these parts everybody goes on wheels, and can't stop to pick them. And certainly all the world and his wife sport some kind of vehicle, in the wife's case usually a low-backed pony-cart, while dog-carts and one-horse shays are met in every direction. Even the tramp has his shandrydan, and at each grassy corner you may see drawn up the gipsy cart or the showman's yellow van.

A little village with a big name is Thundersley, with a wheelwright's shop—a thriving business that, you will perceive—a little inn, and a few scattered cottages, all as quiet and secluded as can be

imagined. But the mark of the master builder is upon the land. Imaginary squares, terraces, and gardens are pegged out upon the peaceful fields, and here and there some one bolder than the rest has bought a plot of land and reared upon it his villa of yellow brick. It seems a healthy, breezy spot, and here and there you get glimpses of a wide landscape stretched around.

Still following the wire through a pleasant country, the town of Rayleigh begins with a weather-boarded cottage or two, and a marvellous one with a thatched roof that seems to have come out of the drawing-books of half a century ago, in which you may find just such another thatched cottage, with a wicker bird-cage hanging at the door and a heavy chimney-stack to prop up the whole concern. Then the road suddenly widens out, and still gets wider, with houses on each side, but so far apart that it would require a speaking-trumpet to hail a neighbour on the opposite side. All is on the upward slope and comes to a point again at the church, which is big and comely, with a turreted tower that stands high above all the other buildings. A gazetteer of 1751 says of Rayleigh: "Here remains one broad, handsome street; but many of the buildings are gone to ruin." There are no ruins now, and the whole place has a thriving, prosperous appearance. There are good shops and good inns, and the little town is a favourite resort of cyclists, who bring a modest kind of prosperity in the train of their whirling wheels. A pleasant lane, from which opens out a charming prospect of the fertile valley of the River Crouch, leads to the ancient earthworks to which, no doubt, Rayleigh owes its former importance. There is a great green mound of circular form, and surrounding ramparts and ditches; but although it is known as Rayleigh Castle, there is no trace of masonry to be seen, and the rounded outlines of the works are not suggestive of hidden foundations. Probably the castle was only stockaded with timber, and doubtless it played a great part in the times of Danish invasion, and may have been held for Dane or Saxon, according to the fortune of war. In the valley far to the right lies Ashendon, said to be the Assandun of the Saxon Chronicle, where Canute and his Danes inflicted a crushing defeat on Edmund Ironside. Ashendon Church had a miraculous image, and was the

object of a pilgrimage in the Middle Ages of our history.

From the railway station, which lies at the foot of the castle hill, you get a full view of the whole position, the earthworks, a windmill on another commanding brow, and the church, which seems to stand higher than either. The whole forms a fine defensive position which seems to hold the command of all the country round. Connected probably with the castle and honour of Rayleigh was a curious tribunal, called the Lawless Court, which met at cockcrow upon the Wednesday after Michaelmas, when all the proceedings were conducted in whispers and the records thereof recorded with a piece of charcoal. The court was transferred to Rochford, about the reign of Elizabeth, by Lord Rich, the son of Henry the Eighth's unscrupulous Chancellor, who in one way or another secured all the lands and manors hereabouts, and at Rochford the court was held till recent days, although its origin and meaning are among the undiscovered secrets of antiquity.

To Rochford the train brings us in a quarter of an hour, and we have not probably missed anything in the transit, unless it be Hockley village, which stands high with good views all round, or Hawkswell, where there is a locally famous spring that once had some reputation as a healing spa. But Rochford strikes at once, with its melancholy groves, and the feeling of the quiet decay that rests beneath their shades. A railway bridge, under which you pass after leaving the station, militates a little against the romance of the first glimpse of old deserted Rochford Hall, the home, almost the palace, of great families of the ancient rock—the Batelers, or Batlers, from whom sprung the Earls and Dukes of Ormond famous in Irish history; the Boleyns of the old civic order; the Riches of the newer nobility of the Robe. Long walls of red brick, solid and high, enclose ancient gardens and pleasaunces; while patched walls and ancient gables show among the trees—trees which retain some memory of stately avenues, of terraces and dignified courtyards, where gilded coaches drew up, and once thronged with lacqueys and serving-men. Over the green sward lovely Anne Boleyn has often tripped, a happy, merry girl, recking little of the chequered future before her, of the splendour of the throne, or the dark shadow of the scaffold. And now cattle are quietly browsing on the lawn, a happy picnic-party

from Mile End is making merry under the trees; the great hall where high revels were held long ago is now a barn, haystacks are built on the foundations of the balustraded terrace.

The church is hard by, separated from the Hall only by the park-like meadow, with its groups of well-grown trees. The tower of red brick is a splendid example of good brickwork, and its tone is mellowed by the centuries which have elapsed since the reign of Henry the Seventh, when probably it was built.

"Are you looking for the grave?" asks in a low voice a pleasant-looking woman in black. There is a funeral going on in one corner of the churchyard. The country equipages, the heavy polished coffin, the handsome mourning garments of those who stand around—venerable figures mostly, with some of stalwart middle age, and a few quite young—seem to show that some noted figure on the country-side has gone to his rest, with those countless ones of the generations before him. But then the open grave is evident enough; what does our polite informant mean? "The grave of the poor woman who was murdered the other day—I thought you must be looking for that," continues the woman in black; and she points to a freshly raised mound, where a wreath is placed and some freshly gathered flowers. And then the story is remembered of a poor woman whose body was found in a stream with marks of having come to a violent end. And our new friend zealously insists on pointing out the place, within a bowshot of church and Hall—a dismal, eerie kind of place where stepping-stones cross the brook, and that seems to give an additional and doleful touch to the shadows that hang about Rochford Hall.

But here is some energetic visitor who is determined to see the interior of the Hall. It is only a fragment we see of the grand mansion of old, four gables and an octagonal turret, and even this has been remodelled to suit the requirements of later occupants, good solid country gentry, justices of the peace, and members of the quorum, but without pretensions to play a great part in the world. The Tudor windows have been turned to plain honest casements, and there is a genteel front door with a heavy knocker, with which our new friend is industriously hammering. He rouses the echoes in empty rooms and corridors, but brings about no other sign of life. "Wake Duncan with your knocking," wake the Batelers, the Boleyns, wake the ancient

groom of the chambers, and bid him announce the Marquis of Mile End.

But if we are not to be received in state there is a back door, doubtless, to which we must condescend. The place is not altogether desolate. Gay garden flowers scramble about here and there, and a wicket opens upon a rambling kind of courtyard, half orchard and garden as well, while there is a splendid old kitchen garden partly enclosed by the famous old brick walls before mentioned. This, the north front of the house, is far more imposing than the other. The quaint gables are crowned by slender chimney-shafts, with richly moulded caps, and the flanking tower, corresponding with a similar tower on the other front, aids the effect, which is happy if incongruous. Then comes a great gap, and the end of the house is filled up with more modern brickwork. But the line of building is continued in a building now converted into a barn, the walls of which show blocked-up windows of late Gothic character, and the ruined stump of another octagonal tower indicates the extent of the ancient façade.

While we have been taking these observations, the Marquis has been boldly practising upon the knocker of a back door of ample dimensions, which is presently opened and a tall, good-humoured dame demands our pleasure. "How much a head to see the 'Awl?" "Just what the gentlemen please," replies Dame Ursula, and leads the way into a vast kind of kitchen or keeping-room, where the farmer, his household, and servants are dining in patriarchal ample fashion, with dogs in attendance, who—the dogs, that is—tumble over each other in their eagerness to greet the strangers. "Bless you, they won't hurt you; they're like lambs, they be," cries the presiding hostess, waving the carving-knife in friendly greeting.

Dame Ursula makes a capital guide, and unlike many modern guides, who are cynically superior to popular tradition, she has a robust faith in the story she has to tell. "Old! you may call it old," replying to an exclamation of the Marquis, as he follows the dame with the rest of us behind him through the turns and twists of the obscure passages. "Eight hundred years old to be sure," she adds; "not all of it: this fireplace ain't more'n four hundred." And she shows us a respectable old hearth with a horizontal spit that may have blazed for the wedding feasts and funeral

baked meats of Boleyns and Riches. But the ancient part is by a winding stair with treads of ancient oak so well grained and solid, that they may yet add another eight hundred years to the age which Dame Ursula so liberally assigns them. Another winding stair leads to a long corridor, with an equally solid oaken flooring, from which open out a number of small, curiously shaped chambers, while a long, low, unlighted room is announced as "The Dungeon where the ghosts used to come from." Not that Dame Ursula will own to a full belief in the ghosts. She never saw any. "And you see no queer sights, hear no strange sounds in the night?" is asked. "Well, we never come up here of a night," replies the dame ingenuously. And we can well believe her. For might not one, perhaps, meet the shade of Anne Boleyn, her hands clasped about her delicate neck; or that hardened but latterly penitent old villain, Lord Chancellor Riche, who died in one of these chambers, the pliant instrument of King Harry's cruelties and caprices, who counted his gains from each noble head that fell on the scaffold, and battered on the spoils of convents and ancient abbeys? Tradition has it that he built the fine brick tower of the church as a kind of expiation, and he certainly endowed a number of almshouses. But could such a man rest in peace; should we not hear his voice of a night as the wind rushed howling along the deserted corridors of Rochford Hall?

"And this is the room where Queen Anne Boleyn was born," says Dame Ursula, showing the way to a pleasant little chamber in the southern turret, quite a likely place for such an occurrence, and if some people say she was born at Blickling we prefer to believe the old-established tradition. "And this is where she was imprisoned," opening the door of a roomy kind of armoury or wardrobe. Perhaps, when she was a child, for it was just the place for a naughty girl to be put, according to the rigid discipline of other days, if not of our own.

But how the place is stripped! There is not an old panel left, nor a tattered morsel of hanging. There is nothing, indeed, left but the bare walls in the unoccupied part of the mansion. Yet there is a strong local interest in the place, and Dame Ursula allows that she is quite tired climbing up and downstairs with one party and another.

After that great, rambling Hall, the

narrow entrance to Rochford town with its tiny houses seems quite inconsiderable. But there is a market-place, if you please, a wide and open square, and it being market-day, there are a dozen or two of sheep penned in one corner, and half-a-dozen dealers holding discourse over them, while half-a-dozen carts are parked in the inn-yard, like a battery of artillery, and doubtless the same number of smart nags are munching each other's hay in the stable. At the front door is a break, full of excursionists, with accordions, banjos, and a key-bugle, which discourse lively music, while the ladies of the party sip the porter-beers for which the house is noted. But a quiet little town and a neat is Rochford in its usual aspect.

The red tower of the church, glowering among the solemn groves of Rochford Hall, is soon out of sight, and with many a turn and bend, the road, like a ship beating up against the wind, slowly approaches the tall tower of Prittlewell Church, which is a landmark for miles around. And the village is "en fête," the school-children are having tea in the Priory grounds, and belated mites with their mugs are hurrying to the scene. Somewhere in the grounds is the spring that gives its name to the village, "the finest spring in the hundred," says our old gazetteer, and keeps supplied the fish-ponds, last memorials of the old monks, although there are still relics of the Priory buildings built up in the more modern house. In an old mill on the little stream was hidden the Duke of Exeter, after the flight from Cirencester of the rebel army that fought for the deposed King Richard the Second, and that began its campaign so bravely by Colnbrook bridge, and hence he was dragged to the place of his execution in the courtyard of Pleshy Castle.

Picturesque enough is the approach to the village, where the handsome church tower lords it over the humble roofs, and the road winds steeply up the hill. But once on the top of the hill, and presto! the country has vanished; you are among the terraces, avenues, "gardens" of Southend, that spread for miles and miles in a quite marvellous development. And in the waning day its gas-lamps are twinkling far and near, mingling with lights here and there from pier and headland, while over yonder the revolving Nore Light flashes out and disappears. And here is the station, with the train, pretty well crammed, for London Town.

## POLLY.

## A COMPLETE STORY.

UNTIL the other night I hadn't been to the "Ambiguity" for three years or more, and I shouldn't have gone there, perhaps, not for another three years, only it began to rain hard just as I was passing the doors, and, as I didn't feel quite so sure as the chap who sold it to me that a newish suit I had on was all wool and well shrunk, a shelter seemed cheap at sixpence.

I almost wish now I'd let myself get wet through or turned into a pub. instead, because, as luck would have it, I sat down near where our little lot had pitched the last time I was there, and I couldn't help moping over all that had happened since me and Bill Scott and his girl and my sister Sue were all together and as friendly as any four in London.

My! What a girl she was!—Bill's girl, Polly Phillips, I mean, not Sue, who, though a bonny-looking lass enough, wasn't to be compared to the other for style. I won't say that was Sue's fault exactly, because she'd been brought up in the country, while Polly was a Londoner born and bred; but she needn't have shown her ignorance like she did that night, especially as we'd come to the "Ambiguity" mainly with the idea of giving her a treat. We might as well have left her at home, because she wasn't pleased at all, but shocked.

"Oh, Polly!" I heard her whisper soon after the first ballet began. "However can they?"

"Practice, my dear," says Polly, "practice. But a lot of the steps ain't as hard as they look. I can do a good few myself, and I'll teach you if you like."

"I didn't mean the dancing," explained Sue; "that's beautiful. I meant the—the clothes."

Polly burst out laughing.

"Oh, you'll soon get used to those, my dear," says she. "To looking at 'em, at least."

Then Sue blushed and shut up; but she rated me finely afterwards for taking her to a place where such things were allowed. I told her it was the custom of the stage and that there was no harm in it, not on the stage, though I owned it wouldn't be considered decent out of doors; but I couldn't bring her round to my way of thinking, and she never went anywhere

again unless she was quite sure all the women would be in long frocks.

Sue had lately come up to town to work for a City firm—she was a mantle-hand, and smart at her business, I'm told—and we all lived together in Polly's mother's house, the two girls sharing a room.

Them being so different it was wonderful how they took to each other. Polly was a fine, handsome girl, always game for a lark and ready with an answer, while Sue—well, Sue, as I have said, was good-looking enough, but as quiet as a City street on Sunday; yet after they got home from work in the evening you couldn't part 'em.

Bill grumbled a bit just at first.

"Tom," he says, "your sister's a nice girl, but since she came I can't get a word with Polly in edgeways. I wish she'd set up a chap of her own."

"'Tain't much good wishing that, Bill," says I. "She'd run away home to Drayfield if a young man looked at her twice."

Bill laughed.

"Ay, she's a quiet one," said he. "But she's a nice girl, all the same."

He didn't dare to say a word to Polly, because, like most girls of a high spirit who have been a good deal run after, she was a bit of a tyrant, and if Mr. Bill wasn't satisfied with her treatment he had to pretend to be, or put up with worse.

After a while he got quite used to Sue taking dummy, as you might call it, and didn't seem to mind it so much, though Polly teased him something shameful at times.

When we were all out for a stroll together, she'd make believe it wasn't manners for her and Bill to pair off, and would either insist on us walking all four abreast, or hitch her arm in mine, saying:

"Come along, Tom, old man. Sisters always like another girl's brother to look after them better than their own."

Then she'd go on in front with me, or make Bill go on in front with Sue. Sometimes, when we two were behind, she'd dodge down a side-street, and we'd never see the others again till we got home.

"Polly," said I, one night, when she'd served 'em this trick, "you'll make Bill jealous."

I was only joking, because though I thought Polly was a real stunner, I'd more sense than to tell her so—she'd have banged my head against the nearest wall if I'd breathed a word of anything warmer

than friendliness—and, as for Bill, well, he knew I wasn't answerable for Miss Polly's whims and fancies.

"Not unless I take up with a handsomer man, Tom," says she, ready as usual to give back better than she got.

"Anyhow, he'll think you're getting tired of him," said I.

"Get out!" said she, laughing. "Bill's too slow to think it's raining before he gets wet through."

"If he ain't pretty well soaked by this, it's not for want of some one to chuck cold water over him," said I, and, whether she felt a bit ashamed of herself or not I don't know, but for that once she let me have the last word.

It must have been just pride and wilfulness made her carry on in this way, though she'd never been like other girls—ready to say "Yes, Bill," "No, Bill," or "Do as you like—it makes no odds to me," according to whichever form of words seemed likely to please his royal highness best. Ordinary girls are too glad to get a chap to risk losing him by daring to show a will of their own before they're wedded; but Polly wasn't an ordinary girl. She could have had her pick of chaps, and, what was bad for Bill, she knew it. She'd always taken good care to let him know that he ought to think himself lucky because she favoured him, but she'd never gone quite so far before.

She made game of him to Sue before his face, telling her things he'd said—the sort of things a chap does say when he's courting, which sound as sweet as sugar and as sensible as Solomon when he says 'em, but strike him as being soft and nothing else if he hears them repeated in cold blood.

Sue was sorry for Bill, and one night, when Polly had teased him till he couldn't stand it any longer, but bolted out of the house and round to the pub. at the corner, she spoke up for him.

"Polly," says she, blushing all over her face, "you're too bad, really."

"Ay," chimes in Polly's mother. "You'll be losing him with your high-mightiness, or else driving him to drink."

"There's very good fish in the sea," said Polly. "And if Bill chooses to make a beast of himself I can't help it."

"Don't talk like that, Polly," put in Sue. "Let Tom go after him to say you're sorry."

"Tom, go and tell Bill that, if he doesn't come back this minute and beg my

pardon for losing his temper, I'll never speak to him again," said Polly, and I went.

I found Bill in the pub., not drinking desperately, but sitting comfortable and thoughtful with his pint and his pipe, and I told him all that had passed.

"So quiet little Sue found her tongue, did she?" he asked, with a queer sort of chuckle. "Here's her health, Tom, and may you find as good a wife as you've got a sister."

It was after this night I began to fancy that Bill didn't fret much when Polly made him walk with Sue. If she took Sue off and left us two to ourselves, he'd look black and maybe swear a bit, but when he was left with Sue his face reminded me of a chap I once knew who pretended he didn't like beer, but took it as medicine.

It never struck me, though, that there was anything between them which Polly was likely to object to until the night we went to the "Ambiguity," and then it wasn't till after the performance that I found it out. We lived down Walworth way, and as soon as the second ballet was over we came out, partly because there was a fearful duffer down to take the last turn, and partly so that we could get a drop of beer and a bit of something to eat before walking to the trams on the other side of Westminster Bridge.

Sausages and mashed potatoes it was we had, in a place not far from Leicester Square—rather a swell sort of place, where there were waiters and little tables to sit down at. It was a cut above what Bill and I should have gone in for if we'd been by ourselves, but we thought the girls would like it, and so they did, while I must say that, considering the slap-up style of the accommodation, we weren't overcharged for our meal.

It was while we were having supper that I began to think there was more liking between Bill and Sue than there was any business to be, considering how long he and Polly had been keeping company. For one thing they kept looking at each other as if there was nothing else in the place worth notice, and for another, once, when I dropped my knife and stooped quickly to pick it up, I saw that Bill's foot was touching Sue's.

It might have been an accident, of course—the table wasn't very big, and Bill takes a fairish size in boots—and maybe I should have put it down to accident if they'd kept their feet still, but they moved them apart

—both moved, mind you—almost as soon as I'd set eyes on them, and when I came to the surface again with the knife I'd dived for, Sue was blushing and Bill looking sheepish.

Polly? No; Polly didn't notice anything. She was too well used to being noticed herself to keep a sharp eye on other folks. Vain? Of course she was vain. As the prettiest girl in our neighbourhood she was bound to be, and I believe she thought every man in that place was admiring her and every woman envying her.

I dare say they were, too. She was looking her best and dressed her finest that night, and when Polly was in her Sunday things she caught your eye like a Union Jack. I can't tell you exactly what she had on, but there was plenty of blue and red and a few other colours in it, and she had feathers in her hat. She worked at the feather-dressing, did Polly, and knew where to get plenty for her money.

I felt proud to be in her company myself, and wished Sue had been togged out more in the same style, but Sue was full of countrified notions about dressing according to her station. I must say she always looked neat, but she never made any show, and once, when I was treating her to a new hat and wanted her to have one something like Polly's last, she actually said Polly had no taste. I don't know whether it was jealousy or just ignorance—ignorance I should think, because it was the only fault she ever found with Polly—but that was what she said.

Well, when we'd finished supper we started off across Trafalgar Square and down Whitehall to the Bridge. We all kept together at first, and Polly chaffed the rest of us because we were so quiet.

"Sing up, Sue, my dear," says she, starting the chorus of one of the songs we'd heard, not so loud as to create a disturbance or get us into trouble, but just loud enough to be pleasant if we'd been in a frame of mind to enjoy that sort of thing.

"Oh, don't, Polly," says Sue, looking frightened. "There's a policeman."

"Why, bless my heart, so there is," cried Polly, leaving us and going up to the bobby. "Please, Mr. Officer, can you tell me the time?"

It was cheek, of course, and a plainer girl than Polly might have been told so pretty sharp, but the copper only grinned and said he was sure her eyes were bright

enough to read Big Ben at double the distance.

"Oh, Polly," says Sue, who was all of a tremble. "How dare you do such things?"

But Polly, who'd been pleased by the copper's compliment, only laughed and went on asking us what was the matter that we wouldn't sing.

"Nothing," says Bill; "but it ain't quite the thing, Polly. At least, not in the West End."

"Oh! ain't it, Mr. Proper?" asked Polly. "And pray how long ago did you find that out? Tom, come and walk with me and we'll have a duet to ourselves."

I went, but we didn't have any duet. My head was all in a whirl over what I'd seen, and I couldn't have sung if I'd been paid for it. At first I thought of telling Polly and giving her a friendly word of warning, but when I tried to speak I was afraid. Besides, it didn't seem fair to accuse Sue behind her back when it was just possible I might have been mistaken, so I made up my mind to hold my tongue until after I'd had a chance of talking to Sue on the quiet.

Polly chaffed me a bit about not being in the humour for singing, asking me which of the ballet-girls I'd lost my heart to, and so on, but she didn't seem to be vexed with me like she was with Bill for hinting that singing in the streets wasn't ladylike. When we came to the trams she wouldn't ride with him.

"No, thank you, Mr. Scott," says she. "I might do something that wasn't West-endy enough for your royal highness. You go and sit in front there with Sue, and don't look round for fear Tom and I shame you by our low goings on."

"I don't see why we can't all sit together," said Bill, but Polly wouldn't hear of it, and as there isn't much time for any argument if you mean to sit anywhere at all on the top of the last tram, she had her way.

I'll never forget that ride, never, because it was then it first struck me that if Polly and Bill fell out there might be a chance for me. As far as looks went, I'll own I wasn't fit to be entered in the same show as Bill, but I earn a decent wage at a very steady job—I'm a carpenter by trade—and, thought I, if Polly will take up with me, even out of spite, I'll do my best to make her a good husband.

Having this idea in my mind, I was less sharp with Sue when I did speak to her than I'd at first meant to be.

"Sue," says I, "don't you know that Bill and Polly are keeping company?"

"Yes, of course I do," said Sue, going as red as Polly's best frock. "Why?"

"Well, I thought you seemed to have forgotten it the other night," I went on.

Then Sue began to cry, but bit by bit she owned that Bill had been making up to her on the sly almost from the first.

"Then I guess there'll be a row," said I. It seemed mean of Bill, and the meanness of it put everything else out of my head just for the minute.

"Oh! no, no, Tom," cried Sue. "You mustn't quarrel with Bill. We meant to tell you before this, only we were afraid, and we want you to help us."

"Help you to what?" I asked, still more angry than anything else.

"Why, to keep it from Polly, and—and to get married," Sue stammered out.

You might have knocked me down with a feather. I hadn't a notion things had gone half so far.

"Not me," said I, as soon as I could speak. "You can do your own dirty work, and let me tell you, young lady, you'll be sorry for yourself if Polly gets hold of you after the wedding."

"She won't," put in Sue. "We mean to go away—right away—as soon as we come out of church."

"If you've got it so nicely cut and dried as that," said I, "you won't want me. But it's a mean trick towards Polly. Whatever will she do, I should like to know!"

"Find another chap," says Sue, with a little laugh. "She says they're all wild for her. You, for one, would be glad enough to step into Bill's shoes. Why not help us and give yourself a chance?"

"Because it's a mean trick," I repeated. All I'd hoped for on the tram was that Polly might get jealous of Sue and throw Bill over. I'd never dreamt that Bill would try to change his shoes of his own accord and want me to help him.

"I don't see it," said Sue. "If Bill marries Polly there will be three of us miserable and only one happy. Besides, she's sure to find out after a bit that he doesn't really love her, and then she'll be miserable too."

This sounded like sense. Being in love with Polly myself, I naturally believed I could make her happier than Bill could if only she'd try me, and try me I thought she'd be sure to if Bill played her false. Still, the business didn't seem straight, somehow, and I didn't consent to be in it

all at once. After a bit, though, Sue talked me round—it was wonderful how, being such a quiet one, she could talk when she gave her mind to it—and, to cut short a part of my tale I'm not particularly proud of, after a month of slyness, whispering, wondering if Polly suspected anything, fearing her mother did, and so on, I saw Bill and Sue married and into the train on their way to South Africa.

It had been arranged that Bill should write to Polly from Southampton, and make a clean breast of the whole business, but, as it turned out, he might as well have saved himself the trouble and the cost of the stamp.

It was about dinner-time when I got home, and presently in came Polly. I could tell by her face she knew or suspected something.

"Tom," says she, her eyes flashing very fierce, "where's Bill?"

"I—I don't know, Polly," said I, wishing I was with him in the train.

"You're a liar!" says she, and it began to strike me I might have miscalculated my chances. I didn't contradict her, and after a bit she went on: "What did you and he and Sue want in St. Mark's Church this morning?"

Well, I told her. How I got it out I don't know, but I told her the whole story, and as Bill and Sue were safe out of her reach, I made out the best case I could for myself. She didn't seem to think it was a very good one.

"Ay; you're a pretty liar!" says she, "a very pretty liar! I suppose it's true they're married, though. Anyhow, I can soon find out. I wish Bill joy of his bargain."

"If you'd listened to what I told you, that night you drove Bill——" began her mother, who had sat quiet and looked frightened till then; but Polly shut her up.

"You mind your own business, mother," she said, "and leave me to mind mine. You needn't wait tea for me."

With that she bounced out of the house, and up to now she's not come back again. I suppose after the airs she'd given herself as the beauty of our road, she felt she couldn't face the chaff the other girls would have been sure to treat her to.

No, I don't think she's dead. Sometimes I almost wish we knew she was. Perhaps, though, she'll come home some day. Anyhow, we're living in the same place still, her mother and I, and often I wake up in the night and wonder if I



didn't hear a knock. Ay! she was a wilful, foolish girl, I dare say, but I love her all the same. I'm at least as much to blame as she was, so I'm always ready to open the door, and the old woman has promised she won't be hard on her.

I'll never forget her—never, but all the same I wish I hadn't gone to the "Ambiguity" again the other night; it set me thinking too hard about what might have been.

### FROM MINUET TO SKIRT-DANCING.

THE minuet is associated in our minds with those lovely creatures in sacques and powder, whom Lancret and Watteau have handed down to us. Watteau's education as a scene-painter gave him a love of costume and colour which he never lost. It plays an important part in all his pictures. He revels in depicting the shimmer of the satin trains, the soft yellow of the costly brocades worn by the fair and frail women who adorned the Court of Louis the Fourteenth and Fifteenth, and who found in the minuet a means of displaying their charms before the susceptible monarchs. What elegance marked every movement, while each turn of the hand, every glance of the long seductive eyes, had a subtle meaning! The history of courtship was contained in the dance, from the first advance to the final surrender in the low curtsy.

From France the minuet travelled to England, where it was received with much favour. The excellent Queen of George the Third adopted it at her most decorous Court, but we may dare swear much of its hidden language and dangerous "ceillades" were suppressed. Queen Charlotte, who revelled in large hoops and high heads, made the dancing of minuets an affair of great importance. To a "débütante" it was a crucial test; and she was not suffered to exhibit before the Court without previous training. Lessons from Le Picque, the Court menuetier, were indispensable if any measure of success was to be attained.

At Court balls there were usually two minuets danced, followed by country dances, which were more to the taste of the King, being less formal and hearty, oftentimes degenerating into a romp, and ending with Sir Roger de Coverley.

In 1814 powder went out of fashion, so too did sacques, hoops, and minuets; side

curls came in with short waists and sandalled shoes. Our grandmothers lost all their dignity. It is difficult to imagine anything more inelegant than the appearance presented by the beauties of the day as we see them in the fashion prints and in the caricatures of Gillray.

The war was now at an end, and the Continent being again open to visitors, an influx of foreigners appeared in London, and as a consequence foreign manners and customs were all the fashion. The new quadrille and, later on, the waltz were introduced at Almack's. In the prints of the time we have a fashionable party dancing the French quadrille; the celebrated Lady Jersey, with Lord Worcester for her partner; while Lady Worcester dances with Clanronald Macdonald, who is imprinting a kiss upon her fair hand. They look a singular group, and justify Lady Charlotte Campbell's remark that until ladies and gentlemen had joints in their ankles, which is impossible, it is worse than imprudent to make such exhibitions of themselves. On another occasion the same writer says: "When people dance to be looked at they surely should dance to perfection. Even the Duchess of Bedford, who is the Angellini of the group, would make an indifferent figurante at the opera, and the male dancer, Mr. North, reminds me of a gibbeted malefactor moved to and fro by the winds, but from no personal exertion." It is difficult for us of this generation, who look upon a quadrille as a lazy walk-over, to imagine that any proficiency as a dancer was a necessary qualification for it. The directions for dancing it in the "Complete Dancing Master" are very elaborate, and the cuts and entrechats required almost the training of a ballet-dancer, as well as a considerable amount of self-possession. It was the custom of Almack's for only one, or at most two quadrilles to be danced at the same time, so that it became a matter of exhibition, the whole assembly standing up on benches to view the performance. Lady Harriett Butler, daughter of the Marquis of Ormonde, was considered a beautiful dancer, having learned her entrechats in Paris. There was always a crowd when she performed. On one occasion she had for her partner Lord Graves, who was extremely fat and by no means in the flower of his youth. Lord Graves, wishing to equal the accomplished and beautiful Lady Harriett, ventured to imitate some of her

entrechats, but missed his footing and measured his length on the floor. Sir John Burke, later on, took him to task for his folly in attempting entrechats with his figure and at his time of life. This reproof irritated Lord Graves, who was smarting under the sense of failure; he answered angrily: "If I am too old to dance, I am still young enough to blow out the brains of an impudent puppy!"

The timely interference of Lord Sefton prevented a duel. He quietly remarked: "The world would condemn you both if you were to fight for such slight grounds, and as for you, Graves, you haven't a leg to stand upon."

The waltz followed closely upon the new quadrille. It was again Lady Jersey who introduced it, and when later the Emperor Alexander visited London, an army of foreigners gave a strong impetus to the movement. Its great popularity gave rise to many disputes as to whence the waltz originally came, whether from the old Provençal "*La Sautouse*," or "*Volte*," or the German national dance, the "*Ländler*." It is most universally ascribed to the last-named. The *Ländler* was under the ban of the authorities as being dangerous to both health and morals; but in spite of prohibitions it made its way to Vienna, where it was introduced in the opera, "*Una Casa rara*," by Vincente Martens. The character of the dance was, however, greatly changed and modified, the tempo being much accelerated. From Vienna it quickly passed to France. Dr. Burney saw it performed in Paris in 1780, and could not help reflecting: "How uneasy an English mother would feel to see her daughter so familiarly treated, and still more to note the obliging manner in which the freedom is returned by the females." Had he lived a few years longer the good old doctor's sense of decorum would have received a shock in the welcome accorded to the dance by English women.

Waltzing has become now so thoroughly an institution of the country that we of the present day can hardly understand the hubbub to which its first appearance gave rise. Ralke in his journal declares that no event in English society ever produced a greater sensation than did the introduction of the German waltz. It alarmed mothers and fathers while it charmed sons and daughters. Every night the waltz would be called, and the ropes would be held by the waiters. In Count Gronow's Recollec-

tions there is a print of the waltz as danced at Almack's; we have the Princess Esterhazy preparing to start; her short petticoats and shoes with sandals give her an ungraceful air. Her partner is Count St. Antonio, afterwards Duc de Cannizaro; Baron Neumann is leading out the Princess Lieven; in the background Brummel, the famous Beau, is conversing with the Duchess of Rutland; while Sir George Warrender in a wonderful green coat, holding a crush hat in his hand, is evidently discussing the vexed question with one of its greatest supporters, Count St. Aldegonde. The foreigners did good service in getting recruits, and in encouraging the débutantes who came shyly forward with fear and trembling into the circle within the ropes, while outside the crowd looked on at their efforts and made unkind remarks upon their giddiness and confusion.

Lady Charlotte Campbell, who objected so strongly to the new quadrille, was not prudent enough to see anything offensive in the dance unless that it disordered the stomach and sometimes made people look very ridiculous; but she adds in her caustic way, "Moralists, with the Duchess of Gordon at their head who never had a moral in her life, exclaim dreadfully against it."

Another purist was to be found in Lord Byron, who for some reason ranked himself with the anti-waltzers. His well-known verses are terribly severe:

What! the girl I adore by another embraced!  
What! the balm of her breath shall another man  
taste!  
What! touched in the whirl by another man's knee!  
What! panting, recline on another than me!  
Sir, she's yours; from the grape you have pressed  
the soft blue,  
From the rose you have shaken its tremulous dew;  
What you have touched you may take. Pretty  
waltzer, adieu!

Theselines were handed about at Brooks's and Crockford's, at first anonymously, but the name of the author soon was whispered from one and then another. Copies were given to great ladies, and extreme consternation was felt by the waltzers at this new blow. Soon, however, their spirits were raised. The young Duke of Devonshire, the cynosure of the matrimonial world, put himself at the head of the waltzing movement; parties were organised at Devonshire House for practising. Soon all London returned to school, the mornings which had been dedicated to the Park were now absorbed in practising the

figures of the new quadrille, or whirling a chair round a room to learn the step and measure of the German waltz; the anti-waltzers were beaten, the waltz adopted by the rank and fashion of London was not to be put in the shade. Championed by Madame de Lieven, the Princess Esterhazy, and Lord Palmerston—who was to be seen gravely describing circles with a fair partner—it triumphed over all opposition, and has reigned supreme for seventy years.

During the period of its residence amongst us, the waltz has altered its character somewhat. In the fifties it changed from the slow and more dignified rotatory motion affectioned by our grandmothers, to the quicker step of the "deux temps," and later on it adopted different varieties, the hop, the spring, the Boston.

One great charm possessed by the waltz is the music written for it. It may not be so classical as that composed for the minuet, which is more stately but less pathetic. The cadence of the waltz is full of melancholy, it seems ever travelling away into the past, recalling something forgotten, then joyously seizing on the present, dashing along to some frantic ending, again returning to the old wall of sorrow and lost love and happiness. Such are the charming waltzes given us by such writers as Strauss, Waldteufel, and others. There are some of these that haunt the memory for years, for a lifetime. They are associated with some important moment in life, it may be our first joy, or our first bitter disappointment. It thrills us to hear the air again, for then the great curtains which hang over the past roll back and we see the scene again—the lights, the flowers, the soft clouds of tulle, the whirling crowd, and the one figure with the starry eyes and the tremulous smile. Which of us has reached the bridge of middle age, and has not felt these cells of memory stirred occasionally even by the German street band?

The polka made its appearance in 1840, coming to us from Germany, where it was known as the Polka Mazurka. The rage for it was wonderful. Callarius, the French ballet-master, had his hands so full that he was obliged to employ his "coryphées" as teachers. It was not nearly so graceful as the waltz, and the dancers often presented a ridiculous appearance. Punch's parody on the Maid of Athens describes it:

By that step so unconfin'd,  
By that neat kick up behind,

Coulon's hop and Michaud's slide,  
Backward, forward, or aside;  
By the alternate heel and toe,  
Polka por sas agapo.

The cotillon, with its many pretty devices and innumerable opportunities for flirtation, became deservedly popular from 1844, and still continues in favour, although of late the proud position of leader does not seem so much sought for by our "jeunesse dorée." The attention of society is, in fact, concentrated upon the new developement, skirt-dancing, which is one of the special products of this century, and will make history. Some one has called it the offspring of a "Mariage de Convenience" between a somewhat effete and exhausted aristocratic stock and a vigorous plebeian. It is, in fact, a mixture of the ballet and the Lancashire clog dance purified and embellished. This compromise was effected some years ago by Mr. J. D'Auban, whose father was a well-known professor of the art of dancing, who had been educated on the classical lines. Seeing, from a commercial point of view, that music-hall dancing was more profitable than the higher and more legitimate walks of the ballet, he proceeded, so to speak, to climb down, and this in spite of the wound inflicted on the family honour. This up-to-date young man wrote a musical sketch called: "Ain't she very shy?" in which he adapted classical means to grotesque ends, and formed the modern school of which Miss Kate Vaughan, Miss Phyllis Broughton, Miss Sylvia Grey, Miss Letty Lind, etc., are the chief exponents. The efforts of these artists—for they undoubtedly deserve that name—have been emulated by their rivals of the burlesque, who were not slow in imitating the skirts of Mr. D'Auban's pupils, adding much of their own boldness, dexterity, and more free and uncultured talent. To these are added all the new effects of grouping, colouring, electric light. The two schools run one another very close, and the original clog-dancer bids fair to rival, if not surpass, her more educated sister.

Skirt-dancing has likewise seized upon society—the society of rank, education, and refinement. Ladies of birth and position are now good enough to dance before the worthier blood, and for their delectation exhibit their "good points." It is all purely classical Greek art. We must remember, however, that in Athens only the slaves danced. "Autre temps, autres mœurs." Moreover, it is useless contend-

ing against the popular taste which has set in a strong current in favour of skirt-dancing with its different variations—serpentine, rainbow, etc. How long it will hold the public is impossible to say; but we may safely predict it will never keep its place as did the waltz. Already it is showing signs of decay.

### GATEWAYS.

THE late "restoration" in its most pleasing sense of the old gateway of St. John's, Clerkenwell, reminds us that, generally speaking, gateways seem to be of all human constructions the most tenacious of life. We may note that they are amongst the grandest and the most romantic ruins of the world, and that in innumerable instances where all else has either perished or has been reduced to shapeless ruin, the gateways stand forth often as perfect to all appearance as in the days when they had a "*raison d'être*." In our own England we can find examples enough without going across the seas, although, of course, we have nothing to compare with the colossal pylons of Karnak, or with the arches of ancient Rome and of Provence, or with the mystic temple gateways of India, China, and Japan. It is difficult to assign a reason for this longevity of the gateway as compared with other edifices, many of which were built with greater ideas of durability. Why, for instance, in the Roman Forum there should be two almost perfect triumphal arches amidst the most absolute ruin and desolation; why the Nile traveller should observe that of many a famous old city, all that remains is a pylon of one of its temples; and why in the vast tracts of China which were devastated during the Taiping rebellion, the monotonous stretch of level country should be broken only by pagodas and monumental gateways. May we surmise that superstition sometimes preserved them when we remember that amongst the pagans of Europe, at any rate, the threshold of a house was second in sanctity only to the hearth, and that in all Eastern countries, arches, entrances, and gateways are under the special protection of gods and spirits? Or is it more likely that gateways were found adaptable to use when other edifices were valueless, and that the conqueror who swept away temples and palaces, and razed castle keeps, retained walls and gateways on the chance of their

coming in handy for his purpose? At any rate, the fact remains that gateways generally survive all else. Even in modernised London, where during the past century the hands of the devastator and the improver have been so busy, we find ample corroboration of this statement. Long after London Wall ceased to be a practical construction, and London Ditch was filled up, the London gates survived as memories of days when our city could shut itself off from the outer world at will. The majority were taken down to make way for wider streets in the year 1761, and the removal of Temple Bar, the last, which is a matter of quite recent history, was not effected without much sentimental opposition.

Of the ancient splendid ecclesiastical establishments, which in the days of their glory must have rendered London one of the most picturesque, if not one of the most magnificent cities of Europe, the gateways long survived, and in one or two cases still survive.

The gateway of the once famous Carthusian Monastery near Smithfield, now known as the Charterhouse, is one of the few substantial relics left of the old buildings, although, be it noted, amongst the other relics doorways are remarkable.

The Early English gateway by which one reaches from Smithfield the fine old church of St. Bartholomew the Great—which, like the neighbouring Gate of St. John's, Clerkenwell, has lately been the scene of an interesting ceremony—is all that remains of the vast monastic buildings properly so called which once surrounded the Priory church of which the present church represents a small portion.

Of mighty Bermondsey Abbey the only relic to be seen within the present generation was the eastern entrance gate built into a street of squalid houses.

The same remarks apply to the ancient palatial residences of London. Of the magnificent noblemen's mansions which lined the Thames—each of which we may be sure had its river gate as well as its entrance to the thoroughfare known as the Strand—all that remains of any consequence is the Water Gate of York House, standing in the Embankment Gardens at the foot of Buckingham Street. All that is left of the palace which Henry the Eighth built on the site of the St. James's hospital for leprous women, is the familiar gateway at the foot of St. James's Street. Of Lincoln's Inn, the feature best known

to the public is certainly the fine old Tudor gateway in Chancery Lane, built by Henry the Seventh in 1518. In like manner thousands of Londoners know as old friends the modest little entrance from Holborn to quaint, sequestered old Barnard's Inn, and the entrance to Staple Inn, under the "Old Houses" in the same street, who have probably never passed under them in their lives. Equally well known is the old-time entrance to the Middle Temple in Fleet Street, but Middle Temple Lane is a sufficiently busy thoroughfare.

London names are full of associations and suggestions, none more so than that of the narrow passages leading from Holborn into Lincoln's Inn Fields, known as Great and Little Turnstiles. Gateways these cannot certainly be called, but the names bring to our minds a vision of days when there were fields about Lincoln's Inn, where cattle grazed, and turnstiles existed to prevent them from straying on to the great road to Oxford and the West.

Even more remarkable is the retention of the old gateways to the inns of London. The inns themselves have, for the most part, disappeared, although here and there beneath the show and glitter of the modern public-house we may detect features of the old building, once a true place of residence for guests and a house of call for coaches. But we may trace their exact localities by the courtyard gateways still existing, and still, almost without exception, bearing the names of the old inns to which they led. A peep through such gateways as still fulfil their original purposes and have not been converted into mere passages leading to offices and warehouses, is a duty to be performed by every conscientious explorer of old London. There is, for instance, the "Old Bell," in Holborn, unaltered since the palmy days of the road; close by, the rampant "Black Bull," well known to Mrs. Gamp, stands over a gateway now leading to model lodging-houses, but once the entrance to one of the most famous Holborn inns. In the Borough High Street two or three gateways still lead to inn courtyards quite unchanged since the days when the Borough High Street almost entirely consisted of inns, for it led to what was perhaps the busiest high-road in the kingdom, the old Dover Road. The "George" still retains its quaint galleries, so does the "Queen's Head," which is now probably the oldest of London inns. The "White Hart," famous as the scene of the first meeting between Mr. Pickwick and

Sam Weller, was only demolished a year or two back, and the "Half-Moon" and "Spur," although without galleries, retain their gateways, and are still old-fashioned enough to be worthy of a glimpse.

If the survival of the gateway is still remarkable in London, over which so many waves of change are constantly passing, and where the exigencies of modern trade demand that the old order of things should continually give way to the new, it is not surprising that in the provinces it should be more noticeable.

The number of religious houses, of castles, of palaces, of fortifications in provincial England, of which nothing remain but their gateways, is remarkable. We do not wonder that a dead old town, such as Sandwich, Rye, or Winchelsea, should retain these shadows of ancient power and importance, but when we note them, still sturdy and strong, in busy cities such as York, Carlisle, Chester, Norwich, and Southampton, we incline to the belief that the gateway must have a tutelary deity in the form of Public Affection. Nay, the busiest towns are those most conservative of their gateways, whilst in quieter places the spirit of destruction has swept them away.

Thus, whilst Carlisle still retains its Botcher, or English Gate, its Ricker, or Scots Gate, its Caldew, or Irish Gate; whilst York has its Monk, Bootham, Micklegate, and Walmgate Bars; whilst Chester has its North, East, and Bridge Gates; sleepy old Chichester has destroyed its four gates because, forsooth, "they interfered with the street traffic;" in lifeless Sandwich only one remains out of five; in Rye only one remains; although, on the other hand, Winchelsea, which is possibly more absolutely lifeless than any of these, retains its Strand, New, and Pipewell Gates. Castle gateways often survive long after keep, walls, and buildings have disappeared, Carisbrooke, Saltwood, and Hurstmonceux being familiar instances to Londoners.

The survival is equally remarkable in connection with buildings which were deserted long before the oldest of our cathedrals was built. Along the entire line of the Roman wall between Newcastle-on-Tyne and Port Carlisle, there are the ruins of towns, some of which must have been of considerable size. In almost every instance, the gateways are in better preservation than the other remains; indeed, they are sometimes the only remains,

and in more than one instance need but the superposition of a stone or two to render them perfect.

When the dissolution of the monasteries destroyed the greatest feature of English rural life, in many instances the buildings themselves were utterly destroyed—all but their gateways, and of these the magnificent specimens scattered over our country are innumerable. At hazard, as instances may be mentioned, the St. Augustine's Gate at Canterbury, the gate of the famous house at Walsingham, of St. Mary's Abbey, and the King's Gate at York, the Ethelbert and Erpingham Gates at Norwich, St. Augustine's Gate in Bristol, that at Bury St. Edmunds, and at the Abbeys of Ramsey and Thorney in the Fen country. It may be that the old monkish builders lavished extra care on the gateways which the outer world saw—for it was politically important to impress the outer world at once—and that popular reverence preserved them. At any rate, there the gateways often linger as the solitary relics of a mighty past.

We have purposely, in our necessarily abridged survey of the survival of the gateway, confined our attention to our own country; but this survival is quite as remarkable abroad. Italian, French, and Spanish towns offer splendid examples, whilst such Belgian and Dutch cities as have levelled their walls have generally retained their gateways, which are striking and picturesque features of a rarely striking or picturesque landscape.

So it is in the Far East. Often the entrance to the courtyard of a Buddhist temple is a more imposing edifice than the temple itself, so that often in temple cities such as Benares or Pekin, or Kioto or Tokio, the traveller is prepared for a vastness and magnificence which do not exist. One of the most prominent features of the Japanese landscape is the frequent "Torii"—literally, "bird rest"—a huge stone gateway leading often to temples, shrines, and holy places of which nothing remain but crumbling ruins of timber.

The same peculiarity strikes the explorer of ancient Egypt. Of many a famous city nothing remains above the ever-shifting, all-hiding sand but the mighty pylons or entrances, and these are often almost as perfect as when reared by that mysterious race which could transport mighty masses of granite, and polish them, and carve them with a scientific perfection we despair to imitate. So it is in the yet

more ancient, yet more mystic land of Assyria. The most striking relics of Nimroud with which we are familiar are the human-headed lions from the entrances of the Palace, the discovery of which created amongst the local tribes as much panic and excitement as half a century later was caused along Nile banks by the transportation of the long hidden mummy of Rameses the Second to the museum at Boulak.

In short, the evidence of the entire world supports the ancient importance of the gateway. Bible evidence shows that the gates of a city were often taken as representing the city itself. They were places of public resort, places of public deliberation, of administration of justice, of audience for kings and ambassadors, public markets, places of public sacrifice. They were usually richly ornamented, and were superscribed with sentences from the Law. The gates of Solomon's Temple were overlaid with gold and carved; those of the Holy Place were of olive-wood, two-leaved, and overlaid with gold.

The Romans held the gateway in religious esteem; it had its particular god, Janus, and its particular slave-attendants, who, when liberated, dedicated their chains to the Lares. Allusion has been made to the two arches in the Roman Forum, which are perhaps the most perfectly preserved relics in the city, and the institution of the triumphal arch as a peculiar and rarely conferred honour had without doubt a distinct association with the religious and superstitious ideas prevalent with regard to entrances.

## WHITE LILAC.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER III.

THE following afternoon we looked in upon a great political banquet, at which, as we knew, Montesson was to be the principal speaker. A gallery was reserved at the end of the hall for lady spectators, and the immense concourse of menfolk below lay between us and the leading lights of the party who occupied the platform. Across this gulf, the well-known figure of Montesson was conspicuous. The eating was over, and the speeches were in full swing by the time we entered; and very soon after, our "Knight" rose and advanced to the front.

Never shall I forget the burst of

applause which greeted him. With one accord the whole company rose from their seats, the men shouting, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs. Cheer upon cheer rent the air, while he stood calm, smiling, patient, waiting the opportunity to speak. When I look back upon Montesson, it is always at that point that I try to picture him. I think that until then neither of us had quite realised all that Hilary Montesson's upward struggle had brought him, but at this triumphal moment we seemed to see him in a measure as he was. His style of oratory, when he did speak, was clear, calm, convincing. There was less heat in it than I had expected, but an indication of power which was infinitely more telling than would have been any superficial show of sentiment.

As we regained the carriage and drove back through the dingy crowded streets of the district in South London in which the banquet was being held, I think that both Aurora and I were impressed with much of the reverence for, and even awe of, Montesson, which the large audience we had just quitted had so unfeignedly felt. That night late we arrived at Veddas Hall.

Of the events of the next few days I retain but a blurred, indistinct recollection. I know that the lawns, the orchards, the high-walled gardens, were at their freshest and loveliest, and that Aurora, like all sportive young creatures, was sparkling and bubbling over with the mere joy of living. But to me there had come back, with the renewal of the lovely spring sights and sounds, a strange chill of recollection of their association with Hilary Montesson. "Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!" was the quotation which long ago had haunted me when I thought of him; and that curious, superstitious dread of coming evil was pursuing me once more as it had done so long before.

On the Monday came Mrs. Cholmondeley with a maid, innumerable wraps, and a couple of poodles; and two days later, trim little Mrs. Hardelow and her promised party arrived. To the young *châtelaine* the entertaining of so many guests was an immense enjoyment. She had a thousand schemes ready for their diversion, endless suggestions only waiting to be carried out; while an indefinable smile about her parted lips, and a far-away look in the luminous grey eyes spoke, to me, at any rate, of a hidden happiness, almost too great to be kept within bounds. A tele-

gram had arrived from Montesson to let us know that we might expect him that evening, and Aurora had already left orders at the stables that a trap should be sent to meet every train.

In the meantime, during the course of the afternoon, Mrs. Hardelow made a startling announcement.

"Aurora, my dear, do you remember Madame Kara?" she asked.

"Madame Kara? Yes."

"Well, I hope you will not mind very much, but the fact is she is coming to see us here to-morrow. And, indeed, to tell you the truth, my dear, I promised that you would put her up for a night."

Aurora had become very pale. There was the same crushed, frightened look in her face that her last encounter with that woman had brought there; but she murmured somewhat hesitatingly a commonplace remark about its being quite convenient. Mrs. Hardelow, for her part, seemed to consider herself aggrieved.

"She is tremendously run after, you know, Aurora. It would never have occurred to me to suggest her coming myself, but curiously enough she offered to come. She has had such a week of it in town, and for another fortnight is engaged every single night, so she wanted to snatch a little fresh air while she had the chance. I have no doubt she will sing for us as much as we like—she always does while visiting, that is one reason why people are so thankful to get her."

And with this parting shot Mrs. Hardelow tripped off across the lawn.

I knew of two somebodies who were by no means thankful to get her, but I did not invite my little girl's confidences; I knew her to be too proud and reserved for condolences on such a subject.

Montesson came somewhere about midnight, after we had all gone to bed. The butler had instructions to wait up for him and supply his wants, and one of Mrs. Hardelow's detachment of young men had volunteered to be at hand to give him a welcome. I heard the trap—and, I am sure, so did Aurora—drive up to the front door; and some time after I caught the sound of his quick, light step on the staircase, followed by the creaking of bolts and bars on the ground floor below. Then a dead stillness pervaded the house.

The morning which followed was a brilliantly sunny one, and perhaps on that account our guests were all in the highest spirits. Hilary Montesson surpassed him-

self in easy repartee, in light, playful sarcasm. He was the central figure, as always, both at the breakfast-table and afterwards when we sallied forth upon the lawn. As soon as he could contrive it, however, he drew Aurora and myself away from the others in the direction of the river.

"I wish to stand on that spot in the orchard once more, just there where we first met," he said in explanation.

There had been rain during the night, and the air was filled with fresh spring scents from the young leaves and new-mown turf. Overhead the birds kept up a ceaseless chorus, thrush and blackbird alternating with the smaller songsters, the lark or finch; and in the vicinity, in tones rising and falling, echoing as it were its own call, could be heard the cuckoo, Wordsworth's "wandering voice." But as we strayed over blossom-strewn paths, beneath the spreading white branches of the fruit-trees, Montesson called attention to other, different sounds from these.

"Through all that is bright and joyous," he said, "to me there seems a strain of melancholy in this place. No, not the river, Miss Veddass, in spring that murmur is cheerful enough. It is the incessant 'caw, caw,' away there to the left. Do you not find it depressing?"

"Ah, you mean the rookery!" Aurora answered. "Some people mind it terribly—even Miss Atherton is not very fond of it, I think," she nodded and smiled in my direction, "but for me, it seems merely like home. I am not even conscious of the noise either, only when I go away other places seem too quiet."

"They are settled amongst those tall Scotch firs, are they?" he asked.

"Yes. The path leads there off the west avenue. But you do not intend to visit them, I suppose?" she added, laughing. "Even I must confess that distance lends enchantment to my favourite rooks—in that they are just like bagpipes, you know."

Montesson smiled, too, for the question of bagpipes was a standing dispute between him and Aurora.

"Precisely," he said, and with that the conversation turned on some of our town experiences.

When we re-entered the Hall Madame Kara had already arrived.

#### CHAPTER IV.

A STUDY in light brown was the aspect in which the Russian singer appeared to me

that morning, and I could not help allowing grudgingly that for many it was probably a study full of charm. Light brown, almost reddish, hair; light brown, wide-open eyes; gown, boots, bonnet to match, and all in perfect taste. Just the faintest trace of pink in her cheeks and in her parasol. Yes, undoubtedly, she was what most people would describe as a fine woman.

But there was something snakelike, to my thinking, in her "svelte," undulating figure, in the gleams, sudden and transient, that transformed the habitual expression of mild enquiry in her eyes into one of cruel, hungry eagerness. Wild, groundless fancies on my part these, but quite enough perhaps to account for the overwhelming repulsion with which I went through the common courtesy of shaking hands with her.

Before we had had time to exchange more than the merest commonplaces relating to Madame Kara's journey, Mrs. Hardeelow informed us that our accomplished guest was after all only to stay a few hours, being obliged to return to town that night. To me, for one, the announcement brought only relief; for at sight of her, my forebodings of coming evil, which had been dispelled by the enlivening presence of our house-party, were fast crowding in upon me again. She addressed a few remarks to Montesson, I noticed, but gaily, carelessly, as if he imported no more to her than any of the others; and his replies, in tones of coolest politeness, appeared to entirely satisfy her. He, I felt sure, was startled, and, for some reason, shocked at her appearance amongst us, and I saw him more than once glance uneasily towards Aurora.

After lunch, we set out in a body for the park, over which golf links had recently been improvised. The necessary amount of clubs had only just arrived from town, and all were eager to make a trial of them. Aurora herself would have devoted the afternoon to Madame Kara, considering that she had so few hours to spend with us; but Madame insisted that they could not be better employed than in gaining some idea of this curious new—or was it old?—game about which people got so enthusiastic. So we all assembled about the starting tee, placing ourselves unreservedly under the directions of Mr. Grierson, already an experienced player.

Either because he knew them to be previously acquainted or merely by a chance, our instructor immediately or-



dained that Montesson and Madame Kara should lead off.

"You, Miss Veddass," he said, turning apologetically to Aurora, "have promised to wait for me, so we must come on last. And, by the way, I have given up the idea of foursomes; beginners find them wearisome. Mr. Montesson, I think you know the game! I shall trust to you to show your opponent how she is to beat you." And while these two played off, Mr. Grierson proceeded to mark out the rest of us in suitable pairs.

For my part, I was a great deal less interested in the length of my drive, or the orthodox manner of handling a cleek, than in the doings of the two foremost players. Across the great stretch of green sward, although occasionally a clump of trees shut them off from view, I could pretty well follow their movements. I could see that the idea of serious play—if it had ever been entertained—was speedily abandoned; that some sort of dispute had arisen between them, through which Montesson was calmly, coldly polite, and Madame Kara by turns angry and cajoling. From it all I gathered—with a feeling of intense thankfulness—that the spell by which this woman had held this man—almost dragged him, Montesson, in the dust—was absolutely broken, and that his love for my Aurora was now a certainty.

It could not have been more than three-quarters of an hour after the play began that these two, with their balls in their hands, strolled over the grass to where I was standing. Behind me and the youth with whom I was playing had come up Aurora and Mr. Grierson, and we were allowing them to pass us by. Madame Kara's face as she advanced was wreathed in smiles.

"Will you permit me, my dear Miss Veddass," she began, in her slightly foreign accents, "to thank you a thousand times for your hospitality. I have come now to say good-bye, as I shall have just time to walk to the station for my train."

Aurora threw down the club she was holding in her hand.

"You must not dream of walking all the way to the station, Madame," she said. "If you really must go, I shall order the carriage, and, meantime, you shall have some tea or anything else you care to take before starting."

The yellow-brown eyes gleamed more serpent-like than ever, I thought.

"You must on no account disturb your-

self, dear Miss Veddass," she said. "If you will do me the great kindness to make my farewells with Mrs. Hardelow, that is all I ask. As for the walk, I prefer it, and Mr. Montesson has been good enough to promise that he will escort me. Again, good-bye, dear Miss Veddass, and very many thanks."

She held out her hand very decidedly, but Aurora, even as she took it, still hesitated. As if by a sudden inspiration she turned to Montesson.

"Am I right to let her go like this?" she asked.

The question evidently startled him. He flushed uncomfortably.

"It is Madame Kara's own affair," he answered, in his most rigid manner. "I do not see that you have any alternative. I suspect," he added, softening, "you will not get rid of the rest of us so easily. For my part, if I might choose I should decide never to go beyond the boundaries of your realm," and he smilingly indicated the surrounding country with a wave of his hand.

Again the cruel gleam illumined the serpent eyes as they flashed alternately on Montesson and Aurora; but the study in brown continued nevertheless to be a beaming one to the end. Even as they reached the limits of the park, Madame turned to bestow upon us a farewell salutation; then the two figures disappeared in the labyrinth of the shrubbery.

"Here," said Mr. Grierson, turning to Aurora, "you have the nicest little hazard on the course, just the very place for one of those egregious strokes of luck that all beginners come in for." And the game was soon again in full swing.

About half an hour after that it must have been that we were surprised and somewhat startled by the report of a pistol-shot in the vicinity of the rookery. I had given up my play as hopeless by that time, and had gone forward to watch Aurora's, and together we consulted as to the unusual sound.

"I believe I know," Aurora exclaimed at last. "It must be Clarence Rowley, the Vicar's boy, and he can't have been told that I have forbidden it. What a frightful screeching they are making now! It is a good thing Mr. Montesson has gone to the station, he would think they were demons." And, blind victims of fate as we were, once more we turned our thoughts to the intricacies of the royal game.

I, Patience Atherton, am unfortunately

not a writer of stories. So far I have given a plain account of what took place around me during this period of my life—partly because I have always felt that I should like to put on record, however faultily, something of Hilary Montesson as I knew him, and partly for another reason which I shall state later on. But to convey any adequate idea of the tragic horrors of subsequent events would be entirely beyond the scope of my pen.

That same evening there was flashed through the length and breadth of Britain, nay further, to the uttermost limits of the civilised world, the startling tidings that Hilary Montesson, the eminent politician, the shining light of his party, had met—presumably at his own hands—a violent death. For some days the newspapers abounded in sensational accounts of the fatal event, and speculations as to the probable cause, one or two even hinting that from the position of the wound—almost at the back of the neck—it could not have been self-inflicted. This, however, the doctor who had been called in at the time of the accident promptly contradicted. Madame Kara, as the last person who had seen Montesson alive, was summoned to attend the inquest, and gave her evidence, by all accounts, with admirable clearness. She stated—and there was none to gainsay her—that Montesson and she had had a discussion which had ended, he showing himself utterly unreasonable, in a quarrel as they were passing along the west avenue at Veddas Hall; that Montesson had turned off in the direction of the rookery, leaving her to find her way to the railway station as best she could—the result being that she had taken more than one wrong turning, and would indeed have missed the train had it not happened to be considerably behind its time. She had remarked earlier, she said, that Montesson was peculiarly excited, and she called upon Mr. Grierson to corroborate her statement that he was much flushed at the time that she had come up to bid farewell to Miss Veddas. This Mr. Grierson had happened to remark, and he was therefore able to testify to it. A gunsmith from Piccadilly identified the pistol which had been found lying by the side of the dead man as one bought from him by Montesson some ten months before; and after a hearing of a good deal of irrelevant and mostly contradictory testimony from stablemen and maidservants, [the usual verdict of “temporary insanity” was delivered.

For my part, I was excused from appearing at the inquest, as there was plenty of evidence without mine, and I was at the time watching night and day beside Aurora. The fearful shock of seeing Hilary Montesson lying dead beneath the shadows of the tall Scotch firs, which I thought at first must kill her, had resulted instead, after an agonised night and day, in a sharp attack of brain fever.

On the announcement of the terrible truth, made without the least attempt at preparation by one of her lady guests—who naturally could not know that Hilary Montesson was more to Aurora than to other people—she had sped in an anguish of grief to the spot where they had found him. When I reached it, she was leaning over him, her face as deadly pale as his own, holding one of his hands in both hers. The butler, who had been the first to discover him, had pillowed his head on a clump of soft green moss, and but for the traces of blood all around, the existence of the gaping wound in the neck might have been unsuspected. There he lay, the gifted, the eloquent, the loveable, enshrouded in the awful majesty of death! Something, I know not what, of noble and exalted in his expression brought to my lips the old name, “the Knight,” by which so often we had half laughingly called him; but instantly a sharper, more penetrating flash of recollection transfixed me where I stood, as I realised the culmination of all my forebodings.

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!

I scarcely know how long we remained there in the sunless gloom of the thicket. I remember noticing that the russet-brown of the pine needles underfoot would exactly match Madame Kara's hair, and I thought—but this of course was nonsensical—that the deafening, discordant “caw, caw” of the startled rooks overhead had some affinity to Madame Kara's celebrated voice. Then the servants, who had drawn off respectfully on Aurora's appearance, closed round again with the arrival of the doctor; and, placing my arm about the poor, dazed child, I led her through the midst of them, away from the terrible scene.

What need to dwell more here upon her sufferings? On the day of the funeral and for many days after she was mercifully unconscious of all that was taking place. She did not learn with what solemn pomp, tolling of bells and assem-

bling of Worshipful Companies, they laid him to rest in the great Midland city, the place of his birth; nor did she hear the lament that broke forth from amidst all thinking men as the conviction was driven home to them that "a prince had fallen in Israel." For her sake and his, a wreath of fresh-culled Veddas lilac-blossoms was laid upon his coffin, and by my directions buried along with him. Months after, with her own hands, Aurora planted two young lilac-trees from the Veddas shrubberies over Hilary Montesson's grave; and year by year, in the sweet spring-time, these still send forth their shoots and blossom luxuriantly.

While yet the shock of the sad fatality was fresh in men's minds, the startling intelligence was spread abroad that Madame Kara had renounced her profession, married a Russian nobleman, and gone to take up her abode definitely on his Polish estates. Following so close upon Montesson's death, this wedding once more set afoot the speculations and curiosity which were beginning to die down regarding the relations between these two. But as no single person apparently could offer a clue to the truth of the story, it very soon ceased to interest the greedy scandal-mongers, and dropped finally out of sight.

Not as far as I was concerned, however. I knew—had always known—that Madame Kara was Hilary Montesson's murderess. It was not for nothing that those fiendish gleams of jealousy had shot from the woman's eyes that afternoon; not for nothing, indeed, that she—who avowedly hated country sights and country sounds—had made the journey to Veddas Hall from town that morning. What cared I if the pistol belonged to him? It simply meant that she, clever woman as she was, had somehow or other possessed herself of it, as no doubt she had of much of his that was of greater market value.

It may be that it was my duty to make known to all the world my convictions on this point; but they would have answered me by a demand for proofs, and what proofs had I?

Only one, but a conclusive one. Yet, had I brought it forward, raked up the whole story, coupled Aurora's name with that cruel, cruel woman's before all the world, either during the child's convalescence or even after her so-called recovery, I believe it would have been enough to thrust her back once more into the valley of the shadow of death. And my proof? A dainty ivory folding tablet, that must have been ground by men's feet down through the yielding carpet of fir-needles during the excitement that followed the discovery of the body.

It was about a week after the inquest took place. I had gone out after prolonged watching for a breath of fresh air, the better to enable me to go on with it again. Somehow, though the scenes were maddening to me, I strayed first down through the orchard where it seemed as if, at any moment, Hilary Montesson's clear, ringing voice might hail me, then on by the river-side and through the shrubbery to the west avenue, and hence direct to the spot on which he had lain. There, I scarcely know how, I caught sight of the booklet, and stooping, picked it up and fled like a hunted creature.

The words traced upon it were mere scrawls, the feeble efforts of a dying man; but as I discerned them, they were these:

"Aurora, my dearest love, farewell. She has taken my life. My love is all and ever yours, "HILA. . . ."

As I have said, I thought it best—I am but a woman, remember, and not a brave one—to let the dead past bury its dead. Therefore it is that that tablet, infinitely the most precious of Aurora's possessions in the mind of their owner, had the words "She has taken my life" carefully erased from its surface before it passed out of my hands. Therefore, too, that I have made public—under assumed names—the incidents of this sad story; in the hope that Hilary Montesson, if haply he knows of my silence, may accept this as in part an expiation.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Through the Ranks. A Serial		Two Letters. A Story in Three	
Story ... ..	241, 265, 289, 313	Chapters ... ..	305, 333
Concerning Pipes ... ..	245	A Rubber or Two ... ..	277
The Old Dover Road ... ..	248	The King's Double ... ..	293
At St. Sebastian. A Poem ... ..	253	Stockholm. In Two Parts ... ..	298, 318
A Long Vacation Romance. A		On the Cliffs. A Poem ... ..	302
Complete Story ... ..	253	St. Luke's Summer ... ..	302
Brimstone Pete. A Story in Nine		A Voyage Up the Medway ... ..	322
Chapters ... ..	260, 283	A True Story of an Irish	
Equinoctials and other Storms	270	Courtship. A Complete Story	325
"There's Rue for You" ... ..	273	Luck ... ..	328

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NO. 245.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.  
(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER II. ENSIGN GREEN IS "BLESSED."

LEFT to his own solitary reflections, Edward Pouncefort Green sat bolt up on his camp bedstead—that desirable article of furniture giving a loud creak of remonstrance—stared after the retreating figure of Colour-Sergeant number one company, and then went on staring at the door through which he had passed.

After thus ruminating for a while, he gave utterance to the following remarkable ejaculation:

"Well—I'm blessed!"

His present condition and situation hardly seemed to bear out such an assertion, for his nose—always too big for his face—was rapidly swelling to abnormal dimensions, as he ascertained by squinting at it hard with both eyes.

In spite of this untoward circumstance he again repeated the conviction that he was "blessed," kneaded his pillow into more comfortable shape, and lay listening to the band now gaily playing the "Young Recruit," as though no such thing as a whipping-post existed in the British Army, while Private Deacon, with his shirt thrown over his discoloured shoulders, marched across to the hospital between two orderlies, keeping step and time to the music, and with a half-smile upon his pallid lips.

Presently the fellows began to drop in upon Ensign Green. Parade was dismissed; the band played no more, and

the birds had it all their own way in the sunshine.

"You've been and gone and done it, young 'un, you have," said Lieutenant Blizzard, sitting astride a barrack-room chair and observing Mr. Green's nose with great disfavour. "Got knocked over, eh, and all that sort of thing?"

"Queer in the head, you know. Things went jumping around with me; but I'm all right now. I'm as right as a trivet now."

Mr. Green had arisen from his creaking couch and was lounging in a chair formed by a cunning arrangement of straps and sticks, and, like the bath, warranted to pack up anywheres or nowheres.

At this juncture the surgeon looked in—a man much thought of in the one hundred and ninety-third, and whose word had no small weight with the youngsters—with the elders too, for matter of that.

"All right, eh?" he said in a voice that told his native country lay beyond the Tweed. "None the worse for your tumble, Green?"

Mr. Green pointed ruefully to his nose.

"You'll not die of that," said the doctor, smiling.

"N-o," said the sufferer; "but I was going to Major Hanneker's to-night."

His face grew so long as he spoke, his looks so miserable, that there was a loud guffaw at his expense.

"Tis a piece of raw beefsteak on to it—isn't that a capital thing, doctor?" said Lieutenant Blizzard gravely.

"Admirable—the best thing on the face of the earth," replied the doctor, as he donned his cocked hat and feathers, and set off across the square.

By this time two more men—one tall and dark-eyed, the other thick-set and short, with a fierce moustache, hair like



bristles, and a snub nose—had come in. The taller one, Captain Hugh Dennison, looked grave.

"I tell you what it is," he said, stretching out his arms and letting them fall at his sides; "I'm glad that job's over; every word that fellow said seemed to hit me hard. I don't know what the rest of you thought about it."

"But them's your sentiments," put in the fierce little warrior by his side, "and they do you proud, Dennison, and that's all about it."

It was easy to see that under the cloak of his usual droll and jesting manner, the speaker concealed some feeling akin to the gravity of Captain Dennison; while young Blizzard, whose long nose and somewhat retreating chin gave him no little resemblance to a bird, glanced sharply from one to the other.

"You're keeping something back, you fellows. I know you are," said Ensign Green, "and I bust say it's deuced bean of you," he added, mauling his words dreadfully in consequence of the blocked state of his nose; "I've hinst something worth hearing, that's what it is, through that confounded fall of mine. Did that poor devil say anything?"

"Ay, that did he," answered Dennison quickly, glad to put some of the burden on his mind into words; "he spoke out to the chief, I can tell you. He said he'd been led astray, and had no wish to deny it; that he had sold his kit twice over and drank the money, and was sorry for it before they treated him like a dog, but that now his 'heart was broke,' and he didn't care what came of him. 'I'd the makin's of a good soldier in me,' he said, and he faced us all like a lion at bay, I can tell you. I was glad I hadn't been on the court-martial, and I wish with all my heart the 'cat' was dead and buried, or only used for gross moral crimes and not for mere folly, such as many a young soldier drifts into and is none the worse for after—such as we all drift into in our day, for matter of that, officers as well as men."

"But we don't sell our kits," put in Mr. Green feebly, and looking somewhat shamefaced.

"No, but we do worse—some of us," said Blizzard, with a penitential air. "We run up a tailor's bill for the governor to pay, and take it half in cash."

The small warrior—Verrinder by name, but known as "Chubby" by his intimates—seemed much struck by this view of the case.

"By Jove, Dennison, you're right!" he said, standing with his legs wide apart and curling up his moustache into a fiercer curve than ever.

"I know I am," said Dennison quietly; "and I should like to see the lash abolished among our soldiers. I shall see it, too, some day, if I live long enough. I can tell you, I had rather go and see a man shot—who deserved it—than see one flogged for such a petty sin as selling a blacking-brush with the broad arrow on it, as we have seen a man lashed for this morning. It only hardens a man against his fellows, takes all the heart out of him, and kills his self-respect. I think the service would be more popular with a better class of men than we get now if it were done away with."

When Hugh Dennison chose to speak it was the habit of the hundred and ninety-third to listen. Lieutenant Blizzard screwed his stringless glass laboriously into his right eye, and made himself look more like a keenly observant bird of prey than ever. Chubby rammed his hands down into the depths of his trouser pockets, and shoved his shako into a perilous angle on the back of his head. Ensign Green opened his mouth and kept it so to avoid snuffing while the (regimental) oracle spoke.

"By Jove, Dennison! you're about right," said Blizzard, contracting his eye suddenly, and with a crafty jerk dislodging his eye-glass and pocketing it.

"Of course he is," said Chubby; "but there's no fellow to blame that I see, certainly not the chief; he hates the lash, as every one may see! It's the what's-his-names who are in the wrong, you know."

"Quite so," put in Blizzard, as who should say he was glad the cap was put on the right head so satisfactorily to all parties.

At that moment a female figure, a graceful one, too, was seen crossing the square, and all, except Dennison, leaned forward to look. The red flush on Ensign Green's nose spread all over his face, even to his ears, and he breathed hard.

"Get him a fan some one, fetch him a smelling-bottle," said Blizzard, once more focussing his eye-glass and bringing it to bear upon the unhappy subaltern. "He'll get a fit of some sort if some fellow doesn't do something."

These attentions only added to the heat and confusion of Mr. Green, who, forgetting his invalid state, began to bounce about and inveigh against fate.

"I bust say it's a deuce of a shame, Blizzard, to bake fun of a lady before a lot of fellows like that. She's looking this way, I declare she is; it's bonstrous hard, this sort of thing, I can tell you."

"She's looking straight before her, as she always does," said Chubby, peering cautiously from the window; "I'd lay my life she's on some errand of mercy—helping some poor devil or another over the stones—you bet!"

"I wasn't making fun of any lady, Green; I was making fun of you, you know," put in Blizzard aggrievedly. "You shouldn't turn like a newly boiled lobster every time you catch sight of Miss Drew if you mean fellows not to chaff you, you know."

In the attention bestowed upon Mr. Green's blushing agitation at the sight of the quiet, graceful presence of Miss Alison Drew, a slight shade of pallor that crossed Hugh Dennison's dark face escaped notice. He neither peered from the window, nor stirred from his nonchalant position by the mantelshelf; but under his medals his heart beat just a little heavily. When love is deep, and strong, and true, even the sound of a name or the echo of a footstep will stir its pulses.

"She has gone to the Hospital Sergeant's quarters," said poor Mr. Green at length, after a subtle tour of observation round and about the window. "She bust have gone to ask about the child that set itself alight yesterday morning—my fellow told me it was in a bad way."

"Wherever she's gone, she wouldn't be best pleased to see you gaping after her like that—you bet!" said Chubby, tilting his shako to a correct angle over his nose, hitching his sword into position, and generally making preparations to be on the move. But, when half-way to the door, he was arrested by the almost tragic gravity with which Ensign Green—as Chubby afterwards put it—"turned another tapper on."

"Have any of you fellows noticed the new Colour-Sergeant of number one company?"

"Yes; I've noticed that he's a deuced handsome chap—wish I'd such a phiz," replied Chubby, at which there was a general roar—the speaker's style of beauty being like that of a pug-dog, mighty in proportion to its ugliness.

"Oh, yes; he's good-looking enough," continued Mr. Green; "but, then, any fellow can be good-looking."

"I don't know that," put in Blizzard grimly.

"Don't be dense, old fellow," said the other; "you know what I mean."

"Hanged if I do."

"A man may be as handsome as you please, and yet be just anybody; but this fellow stumps me, I tell you. Everything about him—his voice, his way of going about things, the cut of his jib even; why, you aren't better form yourself, Dennison, and I can't say bore than that, can I?"

A murmur from Blizzard, a prompt "Certainly not. No fellow could say more than that," from Chubby, and a quiet amused smile from Hugh Dennison greeted this sally. Edward Pouncefort Green felt that he had made a social success.

"The fellow brought me in here, you know, when I got a bit off my head with the—ahem!—heat, and this confounded stock—and, by Jove! he couldn't have looked after me better if he'd been old Busters himself, and I can't say more than that—can I?"

As has been before stated, Surgeon Geoffrey John Musters was a man greatly thought of in the one hundred and ninety-third, therefore this comparison was received with unanimous approval, and Ensign Green began to think he must be born to be an orator, and that his latent talents in that line had not been properly appreciated by his family.

"I tell you what it is, when you look at that fellow's hand you feel as you wouldn't be surprised to see a signet-ring upon it; and look here, now, when he went off to fall in, I felt like saying 'thank you, old fellow,' just as if it had been you, Blizzard, or even Dennison there."

"Still, it's perhaps as well you curbed your young impulses," said Chubby, with the air of a tried and seasoned warrior who knew the value of unswerving discipline in the ranks.

"Quite so," chimed in Blizzard, ceasing to bestride his wooden steed, and beginning to buckle his armour on for a start. "However, I quite agree with you, Green, in thinking the Colour-Sergeant a very superior sort of chap. It's just like the old chief's clear-sightedness to give him his colours at once. By the way, where did he come in from?"

"From the Rifles, I think. Knows we're down for India, and wants to see service there; swapped with a man who wants to stay at home because of his wife and kids. By the way, did any of you hear

that brute Ellerton tell Coghlan to 'lay it on'! I'll lay a penny the chief didn't, or he'd catch it hot. If we were to go into action I fancy we should lose our Adjutant in the fray."

"Do you mean——" began young Mr. Green, with a face of amaze.

"I mean," continued Captain Dennison sharply, "that when an officer has managed to make himself thoroughly detested by his men, he very seldom does come alive out of action. Every bullet has its billet—so they say; but no one can question the little leaden messenger of fate."

Mr. Green thought the phrase, "little leaden messenger of fate," a thing to make a note of. He thought he might impress his family by bringing it out in a casual sort of manner. He made up his mind to write it down in his military *vade mecum*, when the men should be gone.

As for Lieutenant Blizzard, he screwed his glass tightly into his eye, focussed the Captain of the company, and thought to himself for the thousandth time or so: "By Jove! Where could you find such a fellow as Dennison now? I'll trouble you for any regiment in the service that can show up a better."

Chubby, for his part, delivered himself of the assertion that "there's a lot in that, you bet." And he "often felt like having a prod at old Ellerton himself" when that worthy was "showing up in his worst form."

"Which is pretty often," added Blizzard, and then every one promptly prepared to depart.

Chubby and Blizzard betook themselves to the anteroom, prior to getting out of harness and into mufti: a prolonged and arduous undertaking with both, as became their years and kind; while Captain Hugh Dennison, being on duty for the day, went across the square and through the barrack gate. As he acknowledged the salute of the sentry, his eye fell on a pitiful and beautiful figure on the other side the space where four roads meet, and one that he could not refrain from lingering to look upon. It was that of a young girl with one of those marvellous faces that are to be seen now and again among the Irish peasantry. The great eyes, lambent, and just now fierce with pain, were of the dark, deep grey of some mountain tarn above whose still depths hangs a thunder-cloud. The hair, black as ebony, rippled back from a low, square brow; the short upper lip could impart a look of fiery pride or melting tenderness.

Now the lovely mouth was twitching and trembling, and the little brown hand that held a scarlet handkerchief snooded over the head, and folded under the chin, trembled too.

Captain Dennison was reminded of a picture he had once seen called *Erin Farewell*, in which just such a lovely, troubled face looked from the canvas, telling its own tale of bitter pain.

The girl leant against a rough paling, as if for support, and her great sad eyes gazed fixedly at the barrack gate, watching, through the sheen of tears that rose and fell, watching, with longing passionate and unspeakable, for some one who should come.

Half-way down the narrow road that leads to St. Patrick's Hill, Captain Dennison turned and looked back. The agony in the beautiful face seemed to draw him. He had no conception who the girl was keeping such painful vigil for, and set to wonder what tragedy in humble life he had caught a glimpse of. As he stopped, a woman with a child in her arms stopped too.

"Shure, and it's Norah O'Connor, the craythur," she said, pointing to the waiting figure at the gate; "it's awateheart she is to the man as was flogged the mornin'—glory be to God! and bad 'cess to them as can trate a fellow-crater so—axing yer honour's pardon for spakin', seeing as you're one of the noble gentlemen yerself, and manin' no harm at all, at all, if I must spake the last word to the praste to-night."

The woman spoke with the familiar and sympathetic manner so peculiar to the peasant classes in Ireland; a familiarity that never becomes license or freedom, and permits of utterances that in others might offend.

"And there now, see ye, sir," continued the woman, "that's Miss Alison Drew—the saints make her bed in her sickness—and isn't she a blessed craythur as can feel for the poorest same as for hersel'. They won't let Norah pass the gate, and Miss Alison's bin askin' news o' the poor lad for her—see how she clips the hand of her, same as if she were one lady and her another. Ah, but there's good heretics—and bad Catholics—times about," she added, with a sly glance at the handsome captain, and so, beginning to hush up the child, went on her way.

Yet a moment Hugh Dennison lingered, then turned sharply away, while a hot flush mounted to his brow; it almost seemed to

him as if he had been guilty of a mean action in watching Alison Drew.

But the picture of the two women—Norah crouched against the paling in all the helplessness of sorrow, and Alison bending tenderly above her, lingered in his mind as something precious, holy, beautiful—a thing not to be forgotten.

### CONCERNING PIPES.

MR. GOSCHEN once made, and announced to the world, a startling discovery. In the course of one of his speeches he stated that the increase of consumption of tobacco in 1890 over 1889 was equal to five hundred and sixty millions of pipes! This estimate he reached on a basis of twelve pipes for every ounce of tobacco. Now, a Chancellor of the Exchequer may be infallible in figures and finance, while it is clear that he is not infallible in pipes and tobacco. He neither described the size of bowl on which he estimated, nor the kind of tobacco supposed to be consumed. A pipeful of coarse "Irish Twist" will weigh more than a pipeful of loose, light "Birdseye," and, therefore, an ounce of the one will yield more smokes than an ounce of the other. But what of the size of the pipe?

The reference raises some considerations of much interest to smokers. It is, for instance, curious what differences exist in the size and character of the instruments employed by different nations in the consumption of tobacco. Let us take a look at some.

But, first, it may be recalled that when tobacco was first introduced into this country it was not consumed in pipes at all, but in rolled leaves in the form of rough, loose cigars. Readers of "Westward Ho" will remember the amazement which Salvation Yeo created in Devon when he pulled brown leaves out of his pocket, rolled, lighted, and sucked them, emitting great volumes of smoke. The pipe was a later institution.

Whether or not tobacco was first brought over by Sir Walter Raleigh, or Sir Francis Drake, or Sir John Hawkins, or Sir Amyas Leigh, we need not stop to enquire; but on this point it is worth noting what says "A Veracious Chronicler" of the days of Queen Anne, quoted by Kingsley:

"Whereas Mr. Lane is said to have brought home that divine weed, as Spenser well names it, from Virginia in the year 1584, it is hereby indisputable that full four

years earlier, by the bridge of Putford in the Torridge Moors (which all true smokers shall hereafter visit as a hallowed spot and point of pilgrimage) first twinkled that fiery beacon and beneficent load-star of Bidefordian commerce, to spread hereafter from port to port and peak to peak, like the watch-fires which proclaimed the coming of the Armada or the fall of Troy, even to the shores of the Bosphorus, the peaks of the Caucasus, and the farthest isles of the Malayan Sea; while Bideford, metropolis of tobacco, saw her Pool choked with Virginian traders, and the pavement of her Bridgeland Street groaning beneath the savoury bales of roll Trinidado, leaf, and pudding; and her grave burghers, bolstered and blocked out of their own houses by the scarce less savoury stock-fish casks which filled cellar, parlour, and attic, were fain to sit outside the door, a silver pipe in every strong right hand, and each left hand chucking cheerfully the doubloons deep-lodged in the auriferous caverns of their trunk-hose."

The same chronicler mentions that the best Torridge leaf was worth its weight in silver, which was doubtless an exaggeration. But the reference to silver pipes, even in these early years of tobacco in England, must be noted. They marked an immense advance upon the methods of the people from whom we derived tobacco, who, as reported by the chronicler, "When they will deliberate of war or policy, sit round in the hut of the chief: where being placed, enter to them a small boy with a cigarro of the bigness of a rolling-pin, and puffs the smoke thereof into the face of each warrior, from the eldest to the youngest; while they, putting their hand funnel-wise round their mouths, draw into the sinuosities of the brain that more than Delphic vapour of prophecy; which boy presently falls down in a swoon, and being dragged out by the heels and laid by to sober, enter another to puff at the sacred cigarro, till he is dragged out likewise, and so on till the tobacco is finished, and the seed of wisdom has sprouted in every soul into the tree of meditation, bearing the flowers of eloquence, and in due time the fruit of valiant action."

Some "heathen savages" may have practised this mode of vicarious smoking, but needless to say it was not that of the Red Indian, further north in the American Continent. Thus the Calumet, or Pipe of Peace, of the North American tribes, is passed round among the warriors in order

of rank and age—that is to say, the stem is, but the bowl remains in the centre of the circle upon a rest and charged with tobacco. The bowl is usually of red pipe-stone, a native mineral which is held sacred for this purpose, because the tradition is preserved that the Red Indian was himself originally made from this red stone.

In North America, which must be regarded as the original home of tobacco-smoking, there are other curious aboriginal forms of pipe besides the Calumet. It is probable, indeed, that Hawkins, and Raleigh, and Drake saw less of the Pipe of Peace than of the "Tomahawk Pipe," an interesting arrangement by which the warrior combines business with pleasure—the blade of the implement for work; and the handle of it, hollowed as a pipe-stem, for leisure. The Indians, however, have a great variety of pipes, and have had for many centuries, to judge from the specimens which have been found in the graves of forgotten braves.

According to Catlin, the best Indian pipes have flat and highly-ornamented stems, often decorated with feathers. The bowl is of many curious and more or less elaborate designs—mostly made of the red pipe-stone, but often also of a native green-stone. Some of the bowls are carved into the shape of birds or the heads of animals.

The modern Red man is said to smoke often out of a bowl of slate, which one would suppose to be hardly a sympathetic vehicle for the soothing weed, and yet surely as agreeable as the iron-cased tubes favoured by some of the darker races of Africa. It is said that the Kaffir can make a tobacco-pipe out of anything—even out of a bit of old gas-tubing.

The Laplanders, too, use thin iron for their pipes, but then they have small choice of material, and Swedish iron is close at hand. Further north, however, and also in Siberia, they are more luxurious, and carve for themselves ivory pipes out of the teeth of the walrus.

Allusion has been made to the iron pipes of negro races, but nowhere is smoking more general, and nowhere is there greater variety of implements, than in the Dark Continent. In the British Museum are many interesting examples. The West Coast tribes use both red clay and wood for the bowls, which are always beautifully carved. One bone pipe in use has no bowl, but is very much like a cigar-holder, into one end of which the tobacco is packed. This kind is

said to be especially used by the women of West Africa.

In the British Museum collection there are remarkable specimens from Lagos, with two and three bowls each to one stem. This multiplicity of bowls is found also in some parts of India, but nowhere else that we are aware of. The advantage of the arrangement is not obvious. The Ashantee pipes are of light red clay, and almost Romanesque in shape. From Dahomey, again, the home of serpent-worship, Sir Richard Burton brought specimens in iron and wood of curious shapes, and with highly decorated stems.

In the Tanganyika country wood is used in very funny shapes. One, used for smoking "bhang," or wild hemp, is for all the world like a thread-bobbin stuck at right angles on to a long hollow bone. The famous King Mtesa of Uganda, however, had a very remarkable ivory pipe, almost Grecian in design, and very delicately decorated. In the British Museum is a monster from the Albert Nyanza, presented by the Khedive. It is eight feet long, and is more like a golf-club than anything else with which we can compare it.

The dwarfs of the Ituri region, recently traversed by Stanley, are ingenious and primitive in their methods. They roll up a banana leaf in the cuneiform style affected by grocers, and this forms the bowl. Then they take the mid-rib of another leaf, hollow it, make a hole near the thick end into which they stick the thin end of the rolled leaf, fill the latter with tobacco, and fire away.

The Bushmen of South Africa use bowls of soap-stone (steatite), fitted by means of a short tube into the horn of some animal. The size and the weight of the pipe in this case depend on the stem, if so one can designate the enormous horn; and the arrangement somehow seems to suggest the man who went about looking for a barrel to fit a bung he had found.

In India are to be seen some of the coarsest and most awkward, as well as some of the most costly and artistic, pipes in the world. Red clay is largely used, and the red ware made from it, out of which the common folk make their cumbersome hand-hookahs, is rough and unattractive. A somewhat better red-ware is made in Scinde, where, and in the North-West Provinces generally, a public hookah is to be found in most villages, of which every passer-by may have a few whiffs on payment of some trifle.

Mention has been made of hand-hookahs, but the true Hookah is a pipe which is self-supporting—that is to say, will stand by itself on the floor. As the central ornament of the guest-chamber, it is a conspicuous object, and therefore much attention is paid to its decoration.

A Narghilé, on the other hand, is an Indian pipe which will not stand alone. The word is said to mean cocoa-nut, the shape of which is frequently affected in Narghilés. Sometimes a carefully selected cocoa-nut shell is used, smoothed, polished, elaborately chased, and mounted in silver. Sometimes a Narghilé may be entirely of beaten and chased silver, with richly decorated wood or ivory stem.

The principle of the Narghilé may be seen in the Gourd-pipes of Central Asia. A long narrow gourd is chosen, and tapered at one end. It is hollowed out, but is not the receptacle for the tobacco, which is placed in a small bowl of wood or clay fitted into the top of the thick end of the gourd. In both the Narghilé and the Hookah, of course, the smoke is drawn through water often delicately scented.

The Turkish and Persian Hookahs, or Hubble-bubbles, are well enough known. In Persia a glass Hookah, called a Shishah, is sometimes used, and the ladies of Syria are said to prefer their Narghilés of glass.

A Chillum is not, as some people suppose, another form of pipe, but is the name of the tobacco-bowl attached to the Hookah or Narghilé. A Hookah may be of any size—some are as high as three or four feet—with amber or silver-mouthed tubing of many feet in length, requiring no small lung-power to draw. Eastern potentates lavish immense sums over their smoking machines. Diamonds and precious stones are freely used in the ornamentation of both bowl and stem, and the Shah of Persia's favourite pipe is said to be worth several thousands of pounds. In Cashmere they have some very handsome Hookahs of copper, enamelled in rich colours, with elaborately carved Chillum, silk-covered tubes, and silver mouthpieces.

In Turkey, again, they have two kinds of pipe—the Hookah, or Hubble-bubble, on the Persian and Indian principle, and the Chibouque. This last is an open pipe—the bowl, wide at top, usually of red clay, and shaped so that it will rest on the ground. The stem is very long, sometimes five or six feet, usually of cherry-wood,

and the mouthpiece of thick amber, not to put into the mouth, but against the lips. To light such a pipe as this the smoker needs an attendant.

In contrast to these huge Oriental appliances are the miniature affairs of China and Japan. They have water-pipes in China; but the most common sort have tiny bowls and slender stems. Jade is used for mouthpiece by the rich people; but jade is a costly article, even in China. The Japanese bowls are still smaller, holding just enough tobacco for two or three whiffs at a time.

Another land of big pipes is Germany, and the long painted china-bowls, with metal covers and long flexible stems, are familiar to most of us. For domestic use the stems are very long; but the same build of pipe is used out of doors with a more portable tubing. These pipes are not very good to smoke; but the Germans delight in them, and heavy smokers like to have a bowl which will hold enough tobacco to keep them puffing all day without refilling. In Holland they are more addicted to Clays, and "Dutch Clays" are highly prized by many smokers in this country.

The Briar-root has largely superseded the "Cutty" and the "Churchwarden" in England; yet English and Scotch clay-pipes are still very extensively used, especially in Ireland, where the dhudeen, as a rule, is imported from "perfidious Britain." The names and shapes of Clays are legion, and the illustrated catalogue of the clay-pipe maker is a study in itself. The best pipe-clay is found in Cornwall, and is sent from thence to the pipe makers all over the country.

The largest pipe on record, by the way, is the "Queen's Tobacco Pipe," which used to be kept burning night and day in the London Docks. It held many tons, and was used for the consumption of contraband—and confiscated—tobacco. This, to all good smokers, sinful waste has now been abolished, and contraband tobacco is put up to auction instead of into the Queen's Tobacco Pipe.

The best pipes of all are those made from meerschaum, just as the worst are those made from metal; and for this reason, that the greater the absorbing power of the vehicle to get rid of the nicotine juice, the cleaner and sweeter the smoke. It is said to have been a Thuringian shoemaker who first discovered how well adapted, first for carving, and

then for burning tobacco in, was the clay of his native mountains. Ruhla, in Thuringia, is now the seat of the trade both of real Meerschaums and of sham Meerschaums, which last are made out of the dust left from the genuine manufacture, mixed with common clay or other material.

The following verses on "The Pipes of England" afford an excellent fantasy on our subject. The model will be at once recognised, but the author of the parody is nameless:

The stately pipes of England,  
How beautiful they be,  
With amber lips and meerschaum bowls!  
Such pipes are not for me.  
With scented Latakia they burn,  
And golden crowns they wear;  
And the smoke steals from the scented urn  
Like summer's perfumed air.

The merry pipes of England,  
Amid the joke and jest,  
With gladsome glasses, toast, and yarn,  
Are found then at their best.  
The smoker's eye is seen to wink,  
As many a tale is told;  
Or lips ope cheerfully to drink  
The glorious ale of old.

The cottage pipes of England,  
By thousands made of clay,  
All snowy in their wooden box,  
How beautiful are they!  
From ruddy lips they outward poke  
As white as wool or lard;  
And the lowly do a cheerful smoke  
When times are not too hard.

The best pipes have been named, but what of the best tobacco? Ah! does not every smoker know it? It is that which his own soul loves best. In nothing more than in smoking does the maxim hold good, "Chacun à son goût." One may sing of the rival virtues of pure Virginia, Latakia, Turkish, Cavendish, Schiraz, Golden Cloud, Birdseye, Navy Roll, Rifle Cake, Old Judge, Golden Shag, Sun-dried, and all the multitudinous forms and qualities of the soothing weed. But each man loveth his own brand or his own blend, and is not to be converted from the belief that it surpasseth in excellence all others. And so it does—for him.

Tobacco smoke, as Carlyle truly says, is the one element in which, by our European manners, men can sit silent together without embarrassment, and where no man is bound to speak one word more than he has actually and veritably got to say. Every man is admonished and enjoined, according to the Sage, to stop short at that point; or, at all events, to hold his peace and take to his pipe again the instant he has spoken his meaning. Tobacco is both a leveller and an elevator.

We cannot better leave the subject than in the jovial company of a Scottish bard, who thus sings in praise of the homely pipe and the fragrant weed:

Let the toper regale in his tankard of ale,  
Or with alcohol moisten his thrapple;  
Only give me, I pray, a good pipe of soft clay,  
Nicely tapered and thin in the stapple;  
And I shall puff, puff, let who will say enough:  
No luxury else I'm in lack o';  
No malice I hoard 'gainst Queen, Prince, Duke,  
or Lord,  
While I pull at my pipe of tobacco.

When I feel the hot strife of the battle of life,  
And the prospect is aught but enticin',  
Mayhap some real ill, like a protested bill,  
Dims the sunshine that tinged the horizon;  
Only let me puff, puff, be they ever so rough.  
All the sorrows of life I lose track o';  
The mists disappear, and the vista is clear.  
With a soothing mild pipe of tobacco.

And when joy after pain, like the sun after rain,  
Stills the waters, long turbid and troubled,  
That life's current may flow with a ruddier glow,  
And the sense of enjoyment be doubled,  
Oh, let me puff, puff, till I feel quantum suff.,  
Such luxury still I'm in lack o';  
Be joy ever so sweet, it would be incomplete  
Without a good pipe of tobacco.

Should my recreant muse, sometimes apt to refuse  
The guidance of bit and of bridle,  
Still blankly demur, spite of whip and of spur,  
Unimpassioned, inconstant, or idle;  
Only let me puff, puff, till the brain cries enough,  
Such excitement is all I'm in lack o';  
And the poetic vein soon to fancy gives rain,  
Inspired by a pipe of tobacco.

You probably do not know these verses, but you must admit that they embody a whole code of what Carlyle would call Smoke Philosophy.

## THE OLD DOVER ROAD.

FAMOUS as the "Old Kent Road" has become in the lay of the latest music-hall minstrel, there is nothing about it to suggest the ancient highway, oldest and most famous of the great roads of Britain, which for ages formed the main artery of traffic between London and the coast. The growth of London has almost obliterated the track of the great highway. Chaucer's pilgrims, starting from the old "Tabard," could they make their Canterbury pilgrimage once more, would find hardly a vestige of the old landmarks. The fields and hedgerows, the tracts of yellow broom, the windmills on the hill, the stately abbey, the mazes and fish-ponds, the palaces of great ecclesiastics, the mansions of high nobility, all these have disappeared in a wilderness of roofs. Yet there is a good deal still left to recall the intimate connection long existing between the fair land

of Kent, and the Borough from which we start on our pilgrimage. The smell of the hops is there, delightfully fragrant, the white horse of Hengist stencilled on their "pockets," and the legend "Invicta, Kent." Even a country waggon and a carrier's cart, jogging along at the old country pace through all the turmoil of tramcars, 'buses, and railway vans, tell a tale of their own.

But till Greenwich is passed on one side and Blackheath on the other, all is virtually London, and at Shooter's Hill we may look back on the turmoil we have left behind, wrapped up in its hazy cloud of mingled smoke and sunbeams, without feeling too sure that we have finally escaped from its far-reaching net. It was in returning from his Continental tour—made with a good deal of unnecessary baggage—that Childe Harold apostrophised the mother city with such unflinching cynicism, comparing the visionary dome of St. Paul's to a fool's cap, with other unpolite figures of speech. And on Shooter's Hill the returning pilgrim met with an adventure with footpads, which might very well have happened, for the hill was a noted pitch for "gentlemen of the road," and the humbler jackals who robbed on foot. Here we may recall a veritable history from the "Newgate Calendar," of two gallant young highwaymen who rode out one day from London to Blackheath, and over Blackheath to Shooter's Hill, where they placed themselves in ambush and awaited the approach of their quarry. For they had received trustworthy intelligence from ostlers and drawers, time out of mind the robber's aides-de-camp, of a rich booty passing this way in the shape of a collector of customs, or perhaps of excise, with a whole quarter's revenue stowed away under the seat of his one-horse shay. As had been foretold, at the appointed time the chaise came grinding up the road almost overweighted with bullion, and the collector, an apple-cheeked old gentleman, touching up the old mare as the carriage approached the sinister-looking clump of trees on the top of the hill. The affair seemed almost too easy to the bold desperadoes as they rode out, masked and armed to the teeth, upon the apple-cheeked old gentleman. The rosy cheek turned a little pale as the collector saw that he was fairly trapped. "Spare my life, gentlemen," he faltered, "and you shall have——" Bang! a shot from the old gentleman's unfaltering hand brought down high-

wayman number one, and the other, losing heart, turned his bridle-rein and fled. The old collector had passed his life in facing smugglers, contrabandists, and desperate characters of all kinds, and the crisis had found him better prepared than his assailants. And before long the bodies of the two highwaymen were swinging on the same gibbet for the encouragement of travellers passing that way.

Although the road keeps to the higher ground and gives pleasant glimpses now and then of the river brightly shining, and dotted with sails, and streaked with the smoke of steamers, yet it is a great deal too bare and straight to win upon the affections. Yet history has something to say to this peculiar directness and straightness which is so tiresome to the ordinary wayfarer. The road is as you see it, because it runs on the track of the great Roman road, the chief line of communication between the garrisons of Roman legionaries and the Continent. Yet it seems probable that this Kentish Watling Street was a well-defined trackway in even earlier times, and that the merchants of Gaul passed to and from the flourishing communities who lined the banks of the Thames long before the Romans were thought of. No doubt, later on Julius Cæsar made use of the track in his raids upon the Britons. And when we come to Crayford we are reminded that here was fought one of the decisive battles of English history, if the Saxon chronicle is to be credited. For was it not at Orecanford that our intrusive forefathers gained their first decisive victory over the Britons, so that they ran like fire even as far as the gates of London borough, the Saxon for the first time getting his foot fairly within the door, and keeping it there till he won the whole house at last? And we may solace ourselves for the dulness of Dartford and the general preponderance of murky manufactures by remembering Wat Tyler, who here started that famous insurrection that shook the foundations of the society of the period.

At Dartford the modern road turns towards the river and leaves old Watling Street to pursue its bee-line course over fields and heaths, where it may still be traced. Perhaps this deviation may be due to the attitude taken by the men of Kent at the time of the Conquest, who, if tradition may be believed, having held aloof from Harold and taken no share in



the disastrous battle, intercepted the Conqueror on his triumphal march towards London by throwing themselves into some strong earthworks commanding the great highway at Swanscombe. Hence advancing with oak boughs in their hands they terrified the Conqueror's army, as Macbeth's had been terrified at the approach of Birnam Wood; so that, rather than come to anything worse, the Conqueror, not recognised by that title in Kent, promised to respect their ancient customs and franchises, which was all they wanted.

If the men of Kent were in the business, they are to be thanked for giving us such a pleasant turn of the road to dull Watling Street. For here we have grassy aloses and glimpses of the river and of a pleasant fleet of yachts, and of Ingress Abbey, which may have been a nunnery long ago, but in its actual fabric was built of the stones of old London Bridge, as you can hardly have failed to learn, if ever you have taken the long sea voyage to Gravesend or Sheerness. And it is quite a surprise to come upon the white cliffs and terraced walks of Rosherville, while the road passes at the foot of Windmill Hill, from which Gravesend is seen at its best, with all "the embarked traders on the flood," and Tilbury over the way in its quiet seclusion, and new white forts peering out from unexpected corners. And some miles along the way lies Gad's Hill, among its associations with the Shakespearean age, and Falstaff's genial braggadocio, and of Dickens, who has made the whole district memorable, and peopled the very highway with the creations of his genius.

But now as we approach Strood, the fume and incense of kilns, and breweries, and factories come upon us, and it is a busy world we see as we top the hill, and look down on the wide Medway, the mingled smoke and steam throwing a haze over the wonderful scene presented by the noble old Norman keep that still seems to guard the bridge, and the Cathedral all weathered and brown, and the tangle round about of quaint roofs and dwellings, of closes, courts, and fair old gardens. The great railway girders and the unpromising utility of the modern Rochester Bridge are in some way a foil and contrast to the hoar antiquity on the other side. We may regret the old bridge of stone with its twenty-one arches, or the wooden bridge which existed before that,

and which in one form or shape must have existed since the days of Roman dominion, as it is impossible to believe that such an all-important line of communication should have been left to the mercy of deep fords and crossings in a strong tidal river. The old bridge was thickly peopled with popular traditions: the whole country-side was concerned in it, different parishes took each an arch, and even Church lands relieved from most other imposts were obliged to contribute to the repair of the bridge.

Bridge and Castle have seen some stern service together. Hardly was the Norman keep in a defensible state—it seems never to have been completely finished—when Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, took refuge in it, and was besieged by Rufus with all the force of the kingdom. King John besieged the Castle, which was held successfully for the Barons, and later Simon de Montfort burnt the bridge which he could not storm, and failed also to storm the Castle, although it was surrendered to him after the Mise of Lewes. Disorganised by all these assaults, the old bridge broke down altogether in a time of severe frost, and was swept away in the ice floes. It was next repaired and replaced by Edward the Third when he was on the march to conquer France. And then we hear of the bridge being purposely broken down on the alarm of a French invasion.

After all it was with the spoils of France that a "faire stone bridge" was built at last, in 1387, at the cost of two brave knights and commanders who had gained much booty in the French wars. This new stone bridge lasted to 1850, by which time it had come to be called the old bridge. One would have liked to have seen the four-horse coaches filing over that many-arched bridge, their lamps gleaming in the waters below, and the pale crescent of the moon resting on the dark Castle keep. But the lot of the Castle is, perhaps, happier than it has ever been before, for its courts are laid out in lawns and flower-beds, and the whole is under the care of the Corporation, who give visitors the run of the venerable ruined keep at threepence a head. And the keep, after all, not so much ruined but that you can reach the battlements by a corkscrew stair, and admire all the prospect below: the steam and stew of Strood, the soft windings of the river as it comes wimpling down from the centre of the fair land of

Kent. In the Medway, as it flows midway through Kent, you have an explanation of that puzzling shibboleth which demands the difference between a man of Kent and a Kentish man—the former being one who lives or was born on the east side of the Medway, while the other is not quite “*pur sang*,” and can only be described as “*Kentish*.”

A quaint old high street, too, is that of Rochester, which is just our Watling Street or Dover Road lined with houses. There is the “*Bull*” on the right, just after passing the bridge, a famous coaching house, and still retaining its most characteristic features, with a most pleasant colonnaded portion, that matches very well with the Guildhall on the other side, with its area of chequered Parbeck marble, upon which Hogarth and his friends played “*Scotch hop*” when they visited Rochester on their famous tour. The pavement looks equally inviting now, but who would have courage to begin?

From the Castle battlements we see the white dusty road that we must follow, scored on the flank of the hill; and now we look down on the Castle and Cathedral, on the red roofs of Rochester, and the busy swarm of Chatham, with the masts and funnels of the great war-ships showing among the great sheds and storehouses of the Dockyard. And beyond the Lines and the old-fashioned red-brick forts, and holding a strong position on the crest of the down, stands a huge square tower that looks like some enormous castle keep. “*It is Jezreel’s tower*,” says a passer-by, and like the Tower of Babel, it represents an aspiration “*ad astra*,” which the resources of its builders were insufficient to carry out. But the tower, although roofless and windowless, is still the dwelling-place and temple of many of the faithful Jezreelites, quiet, industrious people who retain a touching faith in the promises and prophecies of their first founder. And as a feature in the landscape, seen against the sky in its gaunt and bare isolation, the tower is not without a certain mystic impressiveness.

Impressive, too, is the inflexible directness of the great highway that stretches before us, over hill and dale, with farms and cottages scattered here and there, among pastures, fruit-gardens, and plantations. Rainham is reached, and then Sittingbourne, a quiet little town which was once busy enough with the traffic of the great highway, and which boasted many excellent

inns, at one of which—the “*Red Lion*”—according to tradition, Henry the Fifth was entertained with his retinue on his return from France after his victory at Agincourt. His host was one Mr. Norwood, probably the sheriff of the county, and the cost of the whole feast was but nine shillings and ninepence, wine costing only twopence a quart and everything else being in proportion.

Beyond Sittingbourne we get glimpses of the low-lying country that borders the sea-channel of the Swale, which cuts off the Isle of Sheppey from the mainland: a district long famed for fertility and for its productive fruit-gardens, but associated with prejudices on the score of non-salubrity. Here was “*wealth without health*,” and people were cheerfully assured that if they “*did not wish to live long*” they should go to “*Mursam, Teynham, or Tong*,” those being the chief settlements in this sub-tropical region. A few miles further and we are at Faversham, the metropolis of this corner of Kent. There is hardly a vestige left of the famous old Abbey where slept King Stephen and his worthy spouse under their canopied tombs, and many great nobles and gallant knights. But some part of the gateway still remains, with relics of the steward’s house adjoining, noted as the scene of the woeful murder of worshipful Master Arden, at the hands of his wife’s lover Meabe and a certain hired brave, one Black Will, a discharged soldier from the “*siege of Ballen*,” who had followed Arden from Southwark even as far as here along the very route we have traversed, without finding an opportunity of striking the fatal blow.

In its present state Faversham is as pleasant a little country town as could be desired, set in a beautiful country almost cloying in its richness; and in Faversham Creek waiting for the tide lies a little fleet of those handsome red-sailed barges which sail hence piled high with hay for the London market, and which give such a grateful relief to the dingy tones of the river traffic. And in the coaching days of old a passage by tilt boat from London Bridge to Faversham, there to join the great Dover Road, was one of the routes available for Continental traffic.

Once past Faversham the attraction of Canterbury begins to be felt, as comets may feel the attraction of the sun before they incontinently tumble into the flare of it. Everything is of to-day, and yet it might be centuries ago. You may ride with

Chaucer if you will, just so calm and sweet was the pleasant country when his pilgrims rode that way. Just here, perhaps, it was that the Sompnour began his tale—somewhere by Boughton under Blene, and here is Bleau Wood itself, which still retains a savour of its ancient wildness. At Harbledon there are some old almshouses which were in existence when the Black Prince rode this way, as he often did, and close by is the Prince's Well, with water cool and clear, and it is said that while on his death-bed in Westminster tormented with fever and thirst, his thoughts turned to the cool and shady spring, and that a supply of the water was brought all that distance that he might taste it once more. And these old bedesmen of Harbledon were a familiar nuisance in the pilgrim track. They possessed an old shoe which had once belonged to Saint Thomas, and other small relics, which were shown of necessity to the pilgrim and compelled a donation on his part. Erasmus describes the scene as he makes the pilgrimage with Dean Colet, both being infected with the modern cynical spirit, and poking veiled ridicule at the whole affair.

For us Canterbury is only one of the incidents of the road. We may visit the tomb of the Black Prince in the Cathedral, and the humble-looking little church of Saint Martin, the earliest Christian church in England, and partly built of Roman masonry; but Saint Martin's is on the left-hand road which leaves the city, pointing towards Sandwich, and is the actual representative of the Roman road which led to Rutupia, the great port of Roman Britain, a few miles northward of the more modern Sandwich. The latter was itself a great mediæval port, crowded with the masts of ships that had brought loads of pilgrims for Canterbury, who might be seen trudging in crowds towards the towers of the sacred city.

The road which leads to the right and towards Dover is one of the pleasantest and brightest possible, through a lovely fertile country, without commanding features, but with a charming succession of hill and dale of richness indescribable. Nor is the sound of the coachman's horn altogether unknown, as a four-horse coach runs during the summer between Folkestone and Canterbury along the Dover Road.

When you come to that admirable gap in the range of huge white cliffs and bare-backed downs, with the blue sea coming sparkling in, and the white sails,

everything seems to dance in the full enjoyment of sun and breeze. But you can't help wondering at the dispensation that has made of this strip of beach and this mere gap in the great cliffs such an important port and rendezvous of traffic. Of how many great harbours of much greater natural advantages has old Dover seen the rise and fall, while she who has always been a source of some anxiety to her friends, and required a good deal of support in the way of piers and breakwaters, dredgers, groins, and so on, is still alive and merry! The Roman pharos on the Castle Hill bears witness that Roman galleys sailed for the port from the opposite shores of Gaul, while to-day two black streaks over the blue waters indicate that the Ostend and Boulogne boats are making for the same pleasant haven. But our coach must pull up in Snargate Street; we have nothing to do with the Continental traffic, or with the express trains that come thundering past, laden with gay people who are going to take their holidays abroad; with Ambassadors, perhaps, and attachés; with messengers bearing despatches; with brides and bridegrooms on honeymoon tours; with officers rushing to catch the Indian mail; with ladies-maids with handboxes and port-manteaux. All these disappear with a roar and a rattle, and leave not a wrack behind.

But we are thinking of the quiet, placid Dover of old times when the engineers were still burrowing under Shakespeare's Cliff, and the bricklayers were at work on that tall Folkestone Viaduct. How quiet was the old Castle where the sentries paced up and down in their red swallow-tails and worsted epaulettes, a kind of being apart whom one regarded with a kind of awe as devoted for life to what seemed a cruel captivity! And there was one particular point where you were startled by the sudden ringing of a bell, and there was a money-box with the inscription, "Please remember the poor debtors," and the bell was connected by a string with a strong grated window, behind the bars of which were to be seen human figures, and when something was put into the box, hands and a white kerchief waved a graceful acknowledgement. Then there were coaches still on the road, and yellow "vans" from all the country towns which crossed and exchanged their traffic, and kept up a gentle circulation of life in the quiet, cheerful, chatty country-side.

## AT ST. SEBASTIAN.

FAR, and near, and wide they sleep  
 Who die for England's sake;  
 Where never love can its vigil keep,  
 Where never the hearts that ache  
 Can come to tend the happy flowers  
 That spring, as to mock our tears,  
 In the bloom that returns with summer hours,  
 Through all the varying years.

Very far and wide they sleep  
 Who die for England's sake;  
 Yet never, I think, could the charnel gloom  
 So fair an aspect take,  
 As where the southern sunshine lights  
 The long Biscayan waves,  
 And the fort on St. Sebastian's heights  
 Stands o'er the English graves.

O'er their graves who died in the fierce assault,  
 Those guarded walls to win;  
 Do the restless rollers remember yet  
 How their eternal din  
 Was lost in the cheer and battle-cry,  
 Borne on the startled blast,  
 As St. George's banner, borne on high,  
 Crowned the great fort at last?

Very quietly do they lie,  
 Our heroes, laid asleep,  
 Where round St. Clara's fairy isle  
 The breakers surge and sweep;  
 Where the gorse and the broom flash living gold  
 To the blaze of the noonday sun,  
 And high above stands the mighty hold,  
 By English valour won.

The old familiar names stand out  
 To the wistful English eyes;  
 The old familiar tales of fame  
 Wake 'neath the stranger skies;  
 The foreign tones and accents sound  
 Like voices in a dream,  
 So home-like do the names around  
 To the English wanderers seem.

Very quietly they lie,  
 Till the last parade shall come,  
 And the long roll of England's dead  
 Hear Heaven's own muster drum.  
 Ah, stately height 'neath the Spanish sky,  
 Take the trust our fathers gave,  
 When, after their dear-bought victory,  
 They left 'neath your turf the brave.

## A LONG VACATION ROMANCE.

## A COMPLETE STORY.

IN the Long Vacation Oxford falls asleep, and for the space of about three months has few waking moments. The work of repair and restoration is, it is true, taken up with more or less of energy, but the dull, monotonous tap, tap of hammer and chisel only seems to soothe the ancient city to a deeper slumber. The scout, freed from the toils—as well as from the tips—of term, tries to get up a little merriment on his own account, and even goes so far as to indulge in bumping races and cricket matches, but only succeeds in rousing mournful echoes, that sigh as if unwilling to be disturbed in the absence of their lawful masters.

One hot summer, years ago, the city enjoyed an unusually profound slumber. Even through the excitement of Commemoration its drowsiness had been plainly visible, and Town hardly paid Gown the compliment of watching its departing tail flutter out of sight, ere it sank into a blissful state of utter repose. The heat was almost unbearable, and a dull sense of oppression in the air made exercise an effort. There was no bright sunshine, no smiling blue sky, no whispering breeze; a thick haze clouded the sun, and for many days the dead calm remained unbroken.

Yet, in the midst of the slumbering city, one young person was wide awake and full of wondering delight. Regardless of the unpleasant weather, she wandered all day long through deserted quadrangles, in quiet gardens, and along the towing-path beside the tranquil river; and her mood was that of one who is gazing at a beautiful, incomprehensible picture, and fears to be interrupted by some jarring word before the meaning fully reveals itself.

A few days ago, when she was still at home in the north-country vicarage, she had exclaimed a little petulantly:

"Oh, father! I wish I need not spend three dull weeks in Oxford with Aunt Barham. I would much rather go on to Staines at once. Miss Lilley is always so lively and pleasant."

But here she was, pacing Magdalen Cloisters and sighing to herself:

"Only a fortnight longer, and then I must leave this dear place and go to Staines! How shall I endure those coarse, vulgar Lilleys and their tiresome, crowded evening parties, after the beauty and peace that is all around one here!"

From which rapid change of opinion it will be rightly surmised that Miss Edith Barham was of an impressionable nature. She had no young friends, and no very near relations excepting her father, who was the Vicar of a straggling parish among the Yorkshire moorlands, and who took little or no interest in anything that concerned his daughter, being wholly occupied with parochial matters. Her education had been fitful and unsystematic, so that at nineteen her character was still unformed, and her mind dangerously pliable. Time alone could show what manner of woman she was to become.

She generally spent these hot July afternoons in the shady cloisters, until the

shadows began to lengthen, and the air to grow cooler, when she betook herself to the river, and had one blissful half-hour's boating before tea-time came round. For five days she had submitted to the degradation of taking a boatman with her, but on the sixth, having learned to row a little—a very little—she concluded that such a precaution was no longer necessary, and after making many vehement protestations that she could swim, and pretending to listen to numberless warnings and instructions delivered by the man from whom she hired her boat, Edith set out on her solitary voyage.

She had promised to turn into the safer waters of the Cherwell, but discovered, a little to her dismay, that she was quite unable to perform such a feat, and must be content to drift down the Isis.

"However, it won't matter," she said comfortably, "there isn't a bit of danger." But her troubles were yet to come.

Nearing Ifley, she found herself rapidly drifting in among a number of small boats, occupied by some not altogether pleasing varieties of the local athlete, who were engaged in practising for certain city boat-races, destined to take place on Bank Holiday.

"Why do they make such a noise?" she wondered, and for two or three minutes did not realise that the tumult of shouts and yells which arose had any reference to herself. When this fact dawned upon her she felt somewhat nervous, and made matters worse by attempting to get out of the way, nearly upsetting two or three boats during the process. How she managed to turn round was ever afterwards a mystery to her, but when that great exploit was accomplished, her difficulties were by no means at an end. Try as she would, she could not make any headway against the stream, though it was neither swift nor strong, for her limited knowledge of the art of managing a boat was speedily frightened away by the angry shouts and contemptuous laughter which greeted her on all sides. Tears of vexation filled her eyes; she was seized with a wild desire to jump into the river, and swim to the bank, but, fortunately, had not sufficient courage for such a rash proceeding. Help was at hand, however, for at the same moment Edith and her tormentors heard a sudden splash of oars, followed by an indignant exclamation, as another boat, coming up from Ifley, appeared on the scene. Its solitary occupant

was a broad-shouldered, dark-haired young man, who, after a searching glance at two or three of the young men, remarked significantly, and at the same time with perfect quietness:

"I shall remember you, Smith and Briggs!"

The men looked a little ashamed, and offered no reply, while the stranger turned to Edith, and, raising his hat, proposed taking her boat in tow, as he was going up to Folly Bridge.

"It would be rather dangerous for you to attempt it alone, as perhaps you are—well a little out of practice with your sculling, and most likely haven't read the rules of the river very carefully."

"Rules of the river!" echoed Edith; "why, I didn't even know there were any!"

"Ah! then you had much better allow me to take you up," he said, and she gratefully accepted his help. Not another word was spoken as the two boats slowly floated homewards; Edith and her unknown rescuer landed in silence, and were about to part, when the former caught sight of a stout, elderly lady, who stood at some little distance away, with her back towards them. She was conversing earnestly with the man whose boat Edith had hired, and did not turn until she heard that young lady's exclamation of "Aunt Barham!" Then she spun round with surprising rapidity and cried:

"Edith, my dearest child! I am very glad to see you back again, as this worthy man was actually trying to persuade me that you are not capable of managing a boat. 'Indeed,' said I, 'you are entirely mistaken; my niece is able to do anything she chooses.' And you see," she added, turning to the boatman, "that I was quite right, for here she is, all safe and sound. In fact, I have no doubt she can row as well as many an experienced hand, such as yourself!"

The recipient of this interesting information only grinned, having seen Edith's ignominious return in the wake of the other boat; but the girl was pleased to see that the stranger did not even smile, as he turned to bid her "good afternoon" for the second time. However, another interruption occurred at this point; Aunt Barham happened to catch sight of the one person in their little group whom she had hitherto overlooked, and with a pleasant smile upon her fat, rosy face, said heartily:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Thurland; I am glad to see you! Edith, my dear, this is Mr. Thurland; in a city overflowing with young people, he is the only one who condescends to call upon an old woman like myself."

The young man was far from indisposed to becoming acquainted with pretty Miss Barham; he was still more pleased when he saw the look of admiration which her aunt's words called forth; and his feeling was one of positive joy, on hearing the elder lady invite him to accompany them home to tea. Needless to say, he accepted; and his doing so caused Edith some satisfaction, as she was very willing to know more of her gallant deliverer.

His manner was so bright and unaffected, and his conversation so lively and interesting, that, by the time tea was over, Edith had quite decided that he was a great acquisition, and hoped she should see more of him during her stay in Oxford. After tea, the young people strolled about the old-fashioned garden together, as Mr. Thurland was seized with a sudden and irresistible desire to inspect Aunt Barham's hollyhocks. Now that worthy old lady never walked in her garden after the abnormally early hour at which she supposed that the wily and treacherous dewdrop might be found lurking among the grasses, and perhaps the artful young man knew it! At any rate, he presently found himself treading the narrow garden-paths in company with Edith, while Mrs. Barham enjoyed forty winks in her easy-chair.

After doing his duty by the hollyhocks, and making a few brilliant remarks upon the state of the weather, Mr. Thurland ventured to ask:

"What do you think of Oxford, Miss Barham?"

"Oh! I can't tell you, Mr. Thurland! The beauty of it almost makes me afraid at times, it is such a wonderful thing. On these hot, still afternoons, when the city is so calm and peaceful, I sometimes fancy that if I had a great trouble, I would come here to some quiet corner, where the nearness of these old walls, that have lived through so much, would comfort me. But that is only a silly, sentimental idea. Please laugh at it, as it deserves!"

He did not laugh, however, but said gently, "I understand your feeling perfectly," and then there was a long silence. Presently Edith spoke again.

"I wish one could express one's feelings, somehow," she said; "at times I feel quite

wild because I cannot put my thoughts about beautiful places and things into words, and no one else seems able to do it for me. I suppose it is the kind of sensation that deaf and dumb people must experience."

"Are you fond of poetry?" her companion asked.

"I never read any," she replied, "because I am afraid it might make me impractical. Father says it would."

Mr. Thurland smiled. He really could not help it. The idea that this childish creature, with her soft, almost wistful grey eyes, and her sweet, undecided mouth, could under any circumstances be described as "practical," amused him not a little. However, he replied with praiseworthy gravity:

"I think it would give you great satisfaction to read good poetry, and I don't think it would do you any harm. With all deference to your opinion, Miss Barham, it seems to me that there are greater virtues than the somewhat uninteresting one of practicality."

"Perhaps so," said Edith, "but I can't judge fairly, because all the people I know are very sensible and practical. My father, and Aunt Barham—she is father's aunt, really—Miss Lilley, and her nephew, are all very matter-of-fact, and never do anything that is silly or useless."

"I think I have met Miss Lilley, once or twice, when I have been calling here," said Mr. Thurland; "I believe her nephew is a very wealthy banker, is he not?"

Why should the young gentleman look so closely at his companion as he put this question, and why should Edith blush and stammer as she answered briefly?

"Ye—yes, he is." A moment later she added: "Miss Lilley is Aunt Barham's greatest friend, and in May they all spent three weeks together at Ilkley. They often came over to see us, and I spent a few days with them. Miss Lilley wished to take me back with her to Staines, but it wasn't convenient for me to leave home just then, so I am going there when I leave Oxford, a fortnight to-morrow," and Edith sighed deeply as if the prospect did not seem pleasant.

After another long silence, followed by a few commonplace remarks, Mr. Thurland awoke to the consciousness that he ought to be taking his departure, and reluctantly arose to go. Mrs. Barham aroused herself sufficiently to say, "Good evening, Mr. Thurland; come and see us again, as soon as

you can; it's so dull for the child with no one but a sleepy old woman to talk to!" and then she sank once more into a refreshing slumber, while Edith went back to the dim, dewy garden, and thought a great deal about her new acquaintance.

Mr. Thurland, meantime, returned to his lonely rooms, and having surrounded himself with books and papers, sat down to work. But the attempt was not successful. His thoughts wandered idly, and though he read page after page, he did not take in the meaning of a single sentence. This happened only too often, for, notwithstanding the fact that he was a young man of unusual abilities, he had failed to acquire the habit of systematic study, and, except when under the influence of a very strong motive, did not work to much purpose. His present occupation was that of a "coach," but he had remained at Oxford during the Long, with a view to reading for an examination, of which he hoped the result would be his appointment to a more lucrative post. There was not a doubt of his coming out head of the list if he would only exert himself, but there lay the difficulty. He might have been different if there had been any one to take an interest in him, but his father had been dead many years, and his mother and sisters lived on the Continent, rather from poverty than from choice. Consequently, though full of good impulses, a dreamer of great dreams, and something of a poet, Darcy Thurland, at four-and-twenty, was not the man he might have been.

During the first weeks of this vacation he had done no work worth the name, "owing to the heat," he said; but a day or two after he made the acquaintance of Edith Barham there came a change. Though the weather was as hot and sultry as before, it suddenly ceased to be any obstacle in the way of hard work, and Darcy was seized with a fever of industry which promised to carry him through the examination with glory and triumph. For he told himself that he had met his fate, that he was actually "in love"—a state as interesting and delightful as it had been unexpected; and what was better still, that whereas he had hitherto wasted his time, he would henceforward work with all his might, and obtain the now ardently wished-for appointment, that he might be justified in trying to win the girl he loved.

On the day following their introduction, Edith and Darcy chanced to meet in the

Broad Walk, and as neither had come out with any more serious intention than that of taking a constitutional in the shade of the old elms, what wonder was it that Darcy should turn and walk by Edith's side, and that she should gladly assent to his proposal of strolling round the meadow together? Once more the conversation turned on the subject of poetry, and Edith asked her companion what he should advise her to read.

"Wordsworth and Keats are my own favourite poets," he said, "and I think you would enjoy reading their works. If you will allow me, I will lend you the poems of either, or both."

"Oh, thank you so much," cried Edith, "you are very good; but you will miss the books, I am afraid, for I know from your way of speaking of them, that they are not only books, but friends."

"Friends they certainly are," he replied, smiling; "but I shall not part with them in lending them to you, because a great number of the poems will remain in my memory."

"Please recite some of them now," begged Edith very earnestly. "I should like to hear them!"

"I cannot do them justice," said Darcy modestly; "but if you really wish it, I will try;" and beginning with Wordsworth's sonnet on Oxford, he proceeded to introduce to Edith his favourite poets with such complete success that she was quite sure that, however much she might read, she should never like any poems so well as those of Wordsworth and Keats! Darcy owned to himself afterwards that it was those beautiful, changeful grey eyes, glowing with fire and excitement, or shining with tenderness, as the girl listened, that drew him across the borderland which lies between admiration and love.

An hour later they parted at Mrs. Barham's gate, each cheered by an agreeable conviction that another pleasant meeting would take place before very long.

The next day Darcy worked steadily, and it was not until evening that he set out for Mrs. Barham's pretty little house in Banbury Road, armed with the promised volumes of poems. He was so warmly received by both aunt and niece, as to venture upon propounding to them a pleasant idea of his own—in other words, to beg for the honour of taking the ladies on the river occasionally.

"You are very kind, Mr. Thurland," said Mrs. Barham, looking gratified, "and

though I don't care for the river, Edith, I am sure, will be very pleased to go with you. Of course, though she will not own it, she can row beautifully"—Mrs. Barham would have been deeply offended if you had named in her hearing the thing that Edith could not do—"but it is so dull for her to go alone, poor child."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Thurland," said Edith, when they went to inspect the hollyhocks once more; "it is really good of you to offer to take me on the river, for I have not dared to venture alone again, and I hated the thought of that man and how he would laugh, if I had to give in to taking a boatman after all. But I shouldn't like you to sacrifice your valuable time——"

"Sacrifice!" echoed Darcy, with fine scorn. Then the dark eyes looked into the grey ones for a moment, and that was answer enough.

The remainder of Edith's stay in Oxford seemed to glide away like a happy, short-lived dream, both to her and to Darcy. All through the long mornings Darcy worked with a new energy, inspired by the thought of what he hoped his work would win for him; and meanwhile Edith would be dreaming over Wordsworth and Keats in some shady garden, reading again and again the poems which he had repeated to her. Perhaps these quiet hours, when the occupation of each was so mingled with thoughts of the other, did more to draw them together than any number of actual meetings could have done. At any rate, it was always with renewed gladness that they met to spend the hot, still afternoons on the river, drifting idly with the stream, or gently floating on the peaceful, shaded Cherwell.

And so Edith's happy visit came to an end, and the last evening came, all too soon.

Aunt Barham was the most unsuspecting of old ladies, and it never once occurred to her that the two young people had any other feeling for one another than that of simple friendship, for she had fully made up her mind that her grand-niece should marry the wealthy Mr. Lilley, and therefore did not hesitate to invite Mr. Thurland to tea on this last evening of Edith's stay in Oxford.

How willingly he sacrificed his dinner to Mrs. Barham's primitive hours there is no need to say, and it is equally unnecessary to relate how carefully Edith arrayed herself in her prettiest dress, and

spent upwards of an hour in doing her hair in the most becoming way.

When tea was over, Darcy considered in his own mind how he could best contrive to secure a tête-à-tête with Miss Barham, for the hollyhocks had succumbed to the stifling heat of the past few days, and, besides, the garden was small and anything but secluded. However, finding that she had never been in the gardens of Trinity College, he proceeded to give such a glowing description of the beautiful Lime Walk, that Edith at once wished to see it, and what could he do but offer to accompany her?

Up and down the avenue they paced in the sunset light. Overhead was the cool green roof of interlacing branches, and around them the leaves stirred and rustled in the faint breeze which had arisen at last. Beyond stretched the velvet lawn—such a lawn as cannot be found out of Oxford—and above all was the glowing sky, changing and deepening from palest gold to richest rose-colour.

For a long time Edith and Darcy were silent, awed by that wonderful beauty of Nature which gives to her children thoughts that they cannot share with others, because they are unspeakable. At last Edith broke the silence.

"What a beautiful world this is!" she exclaimed impulsively. "I cannot realise that it is the commonplace world of every day."

"Nor I," said Darcy, with a sigh. "We shall both be in a very different world to-morrow."

"Oh, do not speak of it!" she cried. "I cannot bear to think of leaving Oxford. But you will be here; you can come to this place to-morrow and find it just the same."

"Miss Barham," he exclaimed reproachfully, "do you think anything will be the same to me when you have gone?"

Edith blushed nervously, and for a moment did not know what to answer. But she smiled very happily, as she said at length:

"I am coming here again for two or three days, when I leave Miss Lilley's. Auntie was so anxious for me to spend a little more time with her, that I promised to make her another visit—a very short one—on my way home, at the end of October."

Darcy was delighted to hear this; it had been no small hardship for him to decide upon letting Edith go, without his



putting to her the great question which he longed to ask, yet dared not in his present position.

"In three months, then, you will be here again," he said, as they paced the Lime Walk for the last time; "by that time my examination will be over, and I hope to have gained the appointment I wish for. I mean to win it and I will win it," he added earnestly; "and then——" Darcy paused, but his look told the rest, and he could not fail to read his answer in Edith's loving eyes.

Two hours later they stood by the drawing-room window, while Mrs. Barham dozed in her easy-chair. Edith drew aside the curtain, and they looked out. Before them was all the wonder and the mystery of a summer night: the trees were black against the greenish-blue sky; the crescent moon, slender as a thread of silver, no longer looked wan and ghostly, as when they saw it through the flush of sunset, for while the skies darkened it shone ever clearer and stronger.

"It is like a true love," said Darcy softly; "the darker its surroundings, the brighter it becomes." Presently he said regretfully: "I must go now, and we shall not meet again for three months. Miss Barham, you will not forget me?"

And she answered simply:

"I couldn't forget you, Mr. Thurland!"

The day after Edith's departure, Darcy called on Mrs. Barham, and enquired—quite casually, of course—if she had heard from her niece.

"Oh, yes," she replied readily, "I had a letter from her this morning, the dear, thoughtful child that she is! So good of her to write at once to her lonely old auntie, wasn't it, Mr. Thurland?"

Darcy having assented with rather more fervour than the occasion required, Mrs. Barham took the letter from her pocket, and proceeded to acquaint him with its contents:

"She arrived at Staines in time for lunch, and had a pleasant drive to Windsor with dearest Lavinia, afterwards. She wishes to be kindly remembered to you, Mr. Thurland. The weather is cooler. She would write more, but Mr. Lilley is waiting to take her through the conservatories."

Here the old lady beamed over her spectacles at Darcy, and exclaimed rapturously:

"So kind and considerate of dear

Octavius, thus cheerfully devoting a portion of his valuable time to making Edith's visit pleasanter! Though, to be sure, he would do anything for her, and I am looking forward almost daily to hearing of their engagement. Such a charming arrangement it would be!"

"Charming indeed!" assented Darcy politely, feeling with an inward sense of triumph, that he could well afford to do so.

"She adds a touching little P.S.," continued Mrs. Barham, "which I will read to you.

"Dearest Auntie," she affectionately writes, 'I cannot close without again thanking you most warmly for my happy, happy visit. After my delightful three weeks with you, Staines has few attractions for me'—excepting Octavius, I suppose she means, the dear!—'and, if I could, I would return to you to-morrow. I am quite sure that I shall never be so happy anywhere as I have been at Oxford!' Really gratifying, isn't it?" said Mrs. Barham complacently. "I did not know that I had done anything to make the child's visit so delightful as she seems to have found it."

For at least half an hour longer the two talked of Edith, and the unsuspecting Mrs. Barham found nothing extraordinary in the fact that their subject of conversation seemed just as interesting to her companion as to herself. When Darcy at length took his leave, it was with a renewed determination to work and to win.

It was the thirtieth of October. The three months of Edith's absence had slipped rapidly away, and Darcy Thurland sat by his window, idly looking down into the street, and trying to realise that Miss Barham would be in Oxford again on the morrow. When the realisation was accomplished, it did not afford him such intense satisfaction as might have been expected, for he sighed wearily, and exclaimed with some impatience: "What an idiot I have been!" And he was right, on the whole.

For three weeks after Edith's departure he had worked well, cheered by friendly messages sent to him through Mrs. Barham, but after a time these messages ceased, and then, by degrees, Darcy's visits to the old lady became much less frequent, and somehow he did not work quite so hard as before.

At this critical point he received a pressing invitation from an artist friend, a

Bohemian of Bohemians, who lived in London. After much hesitation he decided to accept it, quieting his conscience by making an inward vow that he would read at least six hours a day during the fortnight he should spend in town, and, with this object in view, taking with him about a third part of his library.

But though the fortnight lengthened itself out into six weeks, he did no reading to speak of after the first day or two, and it was with much regret that he returned to Oxford for the important examination. The merry, hand-to-mouth existence of his friend looked very pleasant to Darcy, and one day he was surprised and a little alarmed to find himself thinking:

"If it were not for Edith Barham, I would go to London, earn money by writing, and lead just such a life as he does."

Once admitted, the thought returned again and again, until the sweet memory of those happy days in July was turned to bitterness. It was little wonder that he failed in his examination, and was still, on the eve of Edith's return, as poor as when she went away.

"Do I love her?" he asked himself. "I loved her when she was here, and yet the hope of winning her was not strong enough to keep me to my work. Somehow she doesn't seem to be the kind of girl who can inspire an affection capable of influencing one greatly in her absence; and I—well, I am weak, too. I wonder what will come of it all. I am not likely to be in a position to marry for years to come. To be sure, there is no engagement, nor even what could be called an understanding; but things have gone so far that I cannot honourably back out of it. Perhaps she has completely forgotten me by this time; at any rate, she soon ceased to send messages to me. But if she seems disposed to begin where we left off, she shall find no change in me; and if she chooses to forget the past, I will forget it, too."

On the following morning Edith found herself at the end of another happy visit, and for the second time shed tears on leaving a place which had become dear to her. How it came about she did not quite know, but by the end of her first week at Staines, all her half-tender, half-melancholy thoughts of Oxford began to disappear, and she suddenly awoke to the fact that she was enjoying herself thoroughly. How could she be all-engrossed

by the distant, shadowy Darcy Thurland, when the tangible, substantial Octavius Lilley was at her elbow all day long?

It was not to be expected of Edith Barham, at all events. Gay, frivolous, and money-loving, the Lilleys speedily undid all the good that had been wrought in Edith's nature by the influence of her surroundings, the good books she had read, and that dawning love which had made the days so bright. Now she regarded her promised two days at Oxford as a tiresome delay; Wordsworth and Keats had been exchanged for a series of "Shilling Shockers," and she had begun to think of settling down to wealth, ease, and—Octavius.

As she left Staines behind, however, her thoughts by degrees wandered to Oxford. She could not help recalling some of the incidents of her stay there. They came back to her in a dim, confused way, like an old dream which other dreams have dispelled, and she could not remember exactly what she had said and done. But the thought of Darcy brought a faint blush to her cheek, and she began to wonder what had become of him; if he had obtained the desired appointment; and, above all, what would happen when they met again. What would he say, and what must she do? There was something very charming about him, she owned, and she really had liked him; but then there was Octavius, and—well, it was very puzzling, and she didn't know how she should behave. Perhaps she might like him as well as ever when she saw him again. After considering the matter for some time she came to the conclusion that it would be best to take the safe course of regulating her conduct by Darcy's, and then dismissed the matter from her mind.

Darcy, in a sentimental moment, had likened the moon to love, because, as he said, "the darker its surroundings, the brighter it becomes." He had entirely forgotten another equally strong point of resemblance—the aptness of each to grow dim and pale in the glare of sunny skies.

About three o'clock in the afternoon Edith sallied forth to revisit one or two of her favourite haunts, not without some curiosity as to what her own feelings would be, on seeing the familiar places again. But the sentiments she had more than half hoped to arouse remained dormant; there was nothing in the scenes before her to call them forth. Quiet

streets and peaceful by-ways were a dream of the past; groves and gardens were damp and dreary; the river looked uninvitingly cold, and mists lay thick upon the meadows. In the withered leaves that lay underfoot, or fluttered from the wet branches, there was nothing to recall the glorious greenery of summer, and on Edith's changeful, impressible spirit there fell a sense of chill and disappointment.

As she was walking along High Street on her way back, the wind suddenly rose, and immediately afterwards there came a heavy shower of blinding rain. Edith ran into the nearest shop for shelter, and in doing so, narrowly escaped a collision with a gentleman who stood just inside the doorway, examining some books. She turned quickly to apologise, but the words died on her lips, for before her stood Darcy Thurland!

Having met so suddenly that neither had time for preparation or disguise of any kind, they looked at one another for a moment in startled silence, and in that moment much was revealed. Each saw that the other had changed for the worse, and that all was over between them. Darcy, at length spoke, very coldly, very politely:

"Good afternoon, Miss Barham; this is an unexpected pleasure. When did you arrive?"

"Only this morning," she replied, with equal coldness, but less composure.

"And did you enjoy your visit to—to—Staines was it, or Stamford?"

This implied uncertainty of memory with regard to her movements roused Edith's ire, and with an affected little laugh, she said enthusiastically:

"Yes, indeed! Thank you so much for asking. I never enjoyed anything so thoroughly before, and Staines is quite the most delightful place in the world!"

Darcy bit his lip, and looked uncomfortable, but Edith went on in a sublimely patronising tone:

"I am afraid I must bid you good-bye, Mr. Thurland, as the shower is quite over, and my aunt will be expecting me. It is improbable that we shall meet again, so pray allow me to wish you every success in your future work," and with her grandest bow and most condescending smile, Edith marched out into the rain, which was still falling heavily, in spite of her assertion to the contrary.

Thus their love died at dawning, and its golden noontide glory had no place, save

in the mournful category of beautiful things that "might have been." Love of a stronger, nobler character would have been the salvation of either, but they had loved each other, and through weakness and inconstancy lost their great opportunity.

On Bank Holiday, last August, just as the sun was setting, fat, vulgar Mrs. Octavius Lilley found herself, for the second time in her life, under the limes in Trinity Gardens. Did not the time and place awake within her some tender thrill of recollection? Apparently they did, for having seated herself in the shade of the trees, and taken a little refreshment in the shape of a ham sandwich, she presently remarked to her husband, who stood close by with open mouth and guide-book:

"Only think, Octavius, I once came near marrying a penniless young tutor who made love to me in this very place. What fools girls are, to be sure!"

And Mr. and Mrs. Lilley joined in a hearty laugh.

## BRIMSTONE PETE.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

UNSADDLE, Willie, and let's lie down in the shade of these aspens. I've kept my story till you were old enough to understand it, so now make yourself easy while I trace out the scenes of the great tragedy that happened down there in the meadows. We're going to raise some ghosts.

### CHAPTER I.

LOOK, my lad, I've brought out my mother's picture for you to see. You remember your poor old grandma? She was a Virginian, Willie, brought up from her childhood to believe in slavery as a divine institution—taught before she could walk to hate the devil and all abolitionists. When her father died of debt and worry, and the negroes were sold off by auction, she was left heiress of all that remained, a stony farm in the hills, a tumble-down homestead, and three slaves. She was a stern, quiet woman, with a dangerous temper, not the kind of girl one would have expected to marry, as she did, a man of no family, a northerner, and—what was worse—an abolitionist. They could never possibly be reconciled on the subject of slavery, which she regarded as a sacred

trust, a divine mission of the strong race to look after niggers, and he as a deadly sin that involved the reprobation of Heaven.

He was of Puritan stock, a strong, rough, handsome man, fond of fighting, drinking, and good company, a patriot who loved the Republic and detested slavery, a loving-hearted boy who laughed and enjoyed life like a giant. And mother? Well, perhaps she gradually found out that she hated the loud laughter and coarse strength of a man who wouldn't be bossed.

In 1855, when they married, nobody ever thought that the mere discussion of slavery could lead to civil war, yet it was only six years later that the whole South declared for Secession, and the North took up arms to maintain the unity of the Republic. The news from Harper's Ferry came like the lash of a whip that roused both sides to fury. At that time, being only a little chap, I didn't understand what all the fuss was about; but one incident I recall quite plainly—and I guess that while I'm in this world I won't have time to forget. Mother sat spinning late after sundown, but loth to waste candles; while I rolled on the hearthrug, keeping mighty still for fear of being sent off to bed. It was a sound that first scared me, a noise that swept up from the valley like the cheering of a crowd; then suddenly the door was flung open as if by a gust of wind. Father stood large in the doorway, black against the red glare behind him. It must have been a bonfire down by the creek, but I took the light to be flames breaking out from the world's inside. Father came in, slamming the door behind him, stood pale and stern by the window and looked about. Then his voice rang out masterful and almost triumphant.

"They've declared war!"

Mother rose, clutching at the table to support herself, and her voice sounded like a cry away off in the hills: 'Pete! Pete! what are you going to do?'

He walked over to the hearth, took down his long rifle from over the chimney-piece, and grounded the butt.

"To help save the Union," he said, "and with Heaven's help to set the slaves free!"

Mother stood up erect and very white, her eyes glittering with anger. Twice, she tried to speak, but the words choked her. Then she regained her self-command, and with all her strength of will tried to compel his obedience.

"Put back that gun!"

For a moment I thought that his eyes would drop; but no, he only leant on the barrel wondering. Mother turned to me.

"Johnny—call in the slaves!" As I ran out she went over to the bureau where the family Bible lay, so that when I brought back the niggers we found her standing with hands on the open book. "Pete," she cried, "put back that gun I implore you—think of our child!"

There was a glitter of tears in his eyes, but he picked up the rifle and began cleaning it.

Then she cursed him over the book, in life, in death, and in eternity.

Father bowed his head, gathered up his powder and lead, and left the house; the slaves went grinning to their quarters; and afterwards, when the door closed creaking behind them, I heard a deep moan in the room. Mother had fainted.

At first we worked the old farm same as usual, but when the soldiers took our grey mare and the slaves ran away, the place went to weeds and ruin. We'd little to eat except poultry and potatoes, for our cow was shot by some skirmishers and there was no beast left for the plough. As for clothes, we had to get along with some old things of father's, so that when the war was over we'd scarcely a rag left. Mother used to make me cry, she looked so worn and sorrow, reading the great Bible late at night, and moaning for father in her sleep. She'd stand in the doorway for hours with that lonesome, waiting look in her eyes, as she watched the high road. He never came. Often I'd get mad, for she was so harsh-tempered there was no bearing it; and at last, when I was fourteen, she told me to go away, for she couldn't abide me in the house. Uncle Ned, she allowed, had promised me work on his farm. I took it coolly enough, leaving her without so much as a kiss, though my heart was aching fit to burst. That night when I unpacked my grip in Uncle Ned's garret, I found this little picture of her wrapped up carefully in a sock, and here inside the case a slip of paper with a scrawl in pencil across it: "Don't forget me, Johnnie. I love you still." The paper was damp.

It was full fifteen miles down to home, but I walked there that night through the rain. The doors were open, the old house was empty, the rats were scampering about the floor. The curse had come home to roost.

## CHAPTER II.

UNCLE NED put me on one of his farms up in the hills, let me go to night-school, and, seeing the place was thick with field vermin, gave me a gun. To hit anything with that old weapon was a matter for honest pride, but it taught me enough shooting to handle the worst rifle on earth and kill at sight. Time passed. I grew to be a man, clean-limbed, strong as a colt. As to the dear old deacon, he'd promised me a good team and a new waggon loaded for travel if I'd serve five years. When the time came he handed me as fine an outfit as you'd see in all Virginia. "Take that, my lad," said he, "but if you've a mind to stay, I'll throw in a farm."

At that time I wouldn't have hung around home for a million a year. I was nineteen, the big West was before me, and out there, somewhere towards sunset, maybe my father. I gave the old deacon a hearty handshake, jumped aboard my waggon, lashed up the team, and started out without another thought straight towards the sundown. To my shame, Willie, I knew well enough that mother was working herself to death as cook in a lumber camp, yet I never even had the grace to say good-bye.

It was in the fall of 1874 when I struck the end of the settlements. In those days Bismarck, Dakota, was the last town up the Missouri River, the jumping-off place for the buffalo plains of the Sioux. The town was wild and rough, though I guess that I wasn't much better myself; for since I left Virginia I'd learned to swear pretty hard, besides drinking and gambling as though I'd never been taught decent ways to home. If I tell you I was a young fool, Willie, it's only just to warn you off my trail.

There was a man in town, a California miner, Brimstone Pete by name, who'd just made a pretty big strike in the Black Hills. So far as appearances went, a gentler man never lived; but people used to say that Pete was not a man to be fooled with. In those days it was a big compliment for an old frontiersman to take notice of a mere tenderfoot like me, and I naturally expected that such a man would think no more of me than if I was tending bar. It was hearing my name called that first drew Pete's attention; and although I'd no idea why he should seek me out, I was mighty proud of being seen that night in his company. After that we got to be quite chummy, so that he'd tell me war yarns by the hour, or put me up to all

sorts of tips in prospecting, woodcraft, and dealing with the tribes. He even took an interest in my past life, getting me to tell him of mother and the farm just as if it was worth listening to. I never guessed why.

Since I'd met Pete I was much too proud to associate with boys of my own age, but I'd no idea what an influence he was gaining over me. He looked as rough as a bear, yet he always seemed to think it worth his while to be kind and polite. He knew more than all the crowd put together, yet he was always readier to listen than to talk. He slung his money about with both hands; I'd catch him doing little acts of kindness just as if they were crimes; he was the most religious man at heart I ever knew, yet from his talk he might have been the devil. He said swearing was foolish, so I quit; while as to drinking, I was ashamed to let him think I'd no head for liquor, so I kept sober. Somehow I got after a while to resent his fatherly manners, sulked because I thought he was treating me as a child, and took to hating him. I drank, gambled, and swore harder than ever, just to show him I didn't care for his mollycoddling—in fact, Willie, I behaved for all the world like a raging jackass. So it happened that one night, being in the Black Hills Saloon half drunk, I got into a "scrap" with the bar-tender, and just out of my own foolishness had to fight. My revolver missed fire, the room swung round me and grew black as I stood with my head bent down waiting for death. Then I heard dear old Pete laughing at me. I looked up to find the bar-tender sprawling on the floor, while my friend stood rolling him about with one foot, and laughing at me. Of course, every one could see he'd saved my life, but I wasn't going to let on that I cared, so I sauntered up to the bar and called drinks for the crowd. The gin-slinger, too scared to speak, went back to his bottles; and when all the glasses were filled Pete's health was drunk with cheers. Pete lifted up his liquor when I did, but as we clinked glasses the dear old man stared hard into my eyes. I felt that but for their holding me I should fall, my will weakened, my pride ebbd away, then I awakened to find Pete's glass shattered all to pieces at my feet. Still his eyes held me, but, mine drooped, for I couldn't face him—down went my glass with a crash.

"Right you are," said he. "Steer clear of such truck. You're too good a lad to

fill a drunkard's grave." But for him I'd be a poor, broken-down sot to-day.

Pete wanted to break me of gambling; but that's a hard thing to do, for when a lad once starts playing away his savings it takes a tremendous stroke of fate to bring him back to reason. He knew that all the money I made at my freighting went straight to the faro tables; and he brought me up short that very night.

"Come, my boy," said he; "sit down right here and we'll have some fun. Barkeep, a deck of cards." He took the pack and slapped it down between us. "Now," said he, "the stakes is my three thousand dollars in dust agin your waggon and team."

"Done," said I.

"Make out the order on your team," said he. I wrote and signed on a leaf of his pocket-book, he doing the same. "Highest cut wins," said Pete.

"Hold on," said I, "the stakes ain't even. I'm not putting down enough."

"What have you that you set value on?"

I showed him mother's picture and told him I'd stake it against nothing less than life. He winced. "Put it by, my boy," said he very gravely; then, turning to the cards, cried: "Cut."

"Highest cut goes," said I, and cut a deuce.

"Highest goes," he whispered as he cut ten. Then he glanced up in my face, and I thought that when he spoke it sounded more like a cry. "Boy, you've the devil's own grit. I love you. See, lad, I was only trying your mettle. Take back that waggon and team as a gift from me, and just let me see that 'ere portrafit once again."

I stuck my revolver to his head and pointed at the stakes.

"Take up that paper," said I, "or I'll drop you. What kind of sucking infant d'ye take me for?"

He covered his face with his hands.

"Boy," he whispered, "you have shamed me."

I turned on my heel and went out into the open air, cured of drinking and gambling in one evening. Next day I was told that Pete wanted me; but he was too late. I'd enlisted in the Seventh Cavalry.

#### CHAPTER III.

A GRAND regiment, Willie! Custer was our idol, our hero; one of the most magnificent frontiersmen that ever lived. The Sioux used to call him *Sun Child* because of his long golden hair and buck-

skin clothes. A dandy, you see—a fop—but a great Indian fighter for all that. We knew well in the ranks that with all his dare-devil courage he was as wary as a fox, and we didn't like him the less for his sharp discipline, because he was a gentleman, treating all alike.

There'd got to be a war. Every time the Government had broken faith, the Indians had given us a thrashing. Thanks to our precious Indian Department, the Sioux were better armed than the United States troops; besides, if they got worsted they could fall back on the Bad Lands where we daren't follow—yes, man for man, horse for horse, weapon for weapon, the Sioux were almost ashamed to be seen fighting with us.

General Crook got such a thrashing in March that he couldn't see straight; but instead of sailing in to smash up the Indian programme we just did nothing, so that when we took the field in July, Sitting Bull had managed to get together the very biggest force of savages ever seen on the Plains. Well, at last we moved out from Bismarck, General Terry in command, and, marching up the Yellowstone Valley, the main body camped at the mouth of the Bighorn, while Custer was sent out south to find the Indians. A forced march of three days brought us to the banks of the Little Bighorn River. At noon of July the twenty-fifth, 1875, we surprised old Sitting Bull in camp. General Custer split up the regiment into three battalions—Jackson's and his own to attack, Bradshaw to bring up the mule train. As for me, I was in the second battalion as Major Jackson's trumpeter.

Now, Willie, look—I've brought you to the very spot from which we first saw the great Sioux camp. That river down on the left is the Little Bighorn, running off to the northward, and on the far bank, straggling along the meadow for nearly four miles, was Sitting Bull's encampment. The plan was that Custer should move down behind those hills on the right, to attack at the lower ford, while our battalion kept the enemy amused by crossing the river here. Well, as soon as Custer had started we rode down this bank at a sharp trot, splashed across the stream, and scrambled out dripping on the other side. Do you see that clump of timber away off about two miles across the meadows? Yes, that's where we sheltered our horses when our skirmish line met the Sioux. There was a camp about three hundred

yards ahead of us, and above the tepees we could see the dust-cloud of thousands of Indians coming up at full gallop to charge. Still there wasn't much to keep us interested near by, except a little desultory shooting from under the tents. I heard one of our scouts call out that it was no use wasting lead at long range, for we'd get a better chance by-and-by.

While he spoke, out came the Sioux from behind the tepees. They came along crouched on the necks of their ponies, flogging away with their whips, shooting into the air, yelling like demons. The dust-cloud was full of thundering hoofs, gleaming naked men, waving feathers, flashing guns, and the scream of a cyclone. The Major just went off his head with the excitement. "Prepare to mount!" he yelled, and I sounded the order; so instead of firing a volley we had to fall back like a lot of fools into the timber. The savages were surrounding us by thousands, so that we could have shot them all to bits without losing a man if Jackson hadn't gone crazy; but just as our boys were getting the feel of their rifles, the Major yelled out: "Mount!"

We threw ourselves cursing into our saddles.

"Dismount!" yelled Jackson; and I had to sound the call.

Bullets were whistling in from our rear, so that any man in his senses would have known that we were shut in on every side.

"Mount!" screamed Jackson. By that time the whole crowd was mad enough to kill him — and it would have been a merciful act to put the poor creature out of his misery. An officer rode up to him.

"Shall we charge through them?" he said.

"Yes," wailed Jackson. So, as we cleared the timber, I sounded the "Charge!"

Men were reeling dead in their saddles, horses floundering over thrown riders, the smoke thick as a fog, the roar like a dozen earthquakes, and I rode at the head of the column by Jackson's side. My revolver blazed away in my hand, missing horses, men, earth, and heaven, but I was as happy as a kitten, feeling my horse leap under me, glad of my strength, and trying my best to kill. Then the girth smashed, the saddle went from under, my charger

floundered, my trumpet flung up into the sun — and there I lay in the trail of dead and dying, under the plunging horses as the Indian pursuit swept by. Rifle gone, horse shot, pistol empty, I snatched a full revolver from the stiffening hand of a sergeant, and joined a dozen more luckless unhorsed men to fight nine hundred mounted Sioux in the open. Shoulder to shoulder, gaining a stride at a time, stumbling over dead bodies, blinded with smoke and dust, we worked our way back to the timber. It was only a little way, and Indians too impatient for good targets, for they were keen to be off at a gallop after our flying command. I bowled over a yelling, bragging buck Indian who tried to ride me down; then, within a second, it seemed, our big fight was over, and we crawled under shelter of the trees.

Dead tired, we all lay down to watch the Indians as they wheeled, and galloped after Jackson. The shattered column was reeling across towards the ford, the Sioux, ten to one, pouring in a murderous fire. When they floundered down at last behind the river bank we got fairly sick with suspense, for it seemed as if they'd never, any of them, come up on the further side. At last we saw them, panting and straining up the slope, with Indians neck and neck abreast on either side, and fairly swarming in the rear. It didn't look much like our smart battalion — that broken, frantic mob, scrambling up yon ridge to the top. Do you see the brow of the round hill — there where it's all bare gravel? That's where they turned to face the enemy. But there was no enemy; the Indians had seen Bradshaw coming up with his rear-guard and the mules, thought they were trapped in an ambush, and turned tail back across the river. They'd other game to hunt, for Custer at that moment was forcing the lower ford, so that the Sioux needed every man they had to contest his passage.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER III.

##### THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-THIRD.

As a general rule people in a regiment make the best of each other. It is the wisest course. They are placed very much in the position of many married couples, who, not being particularly enthusiastic about one another, tacitly agree to make the best of things, just because wherever one goes the other goes. You may fall out with ordinary acquaintances, and then—leaving the place where their domestic tents are pitched—leave them. When you fall out with any one in your own regiment, you take the obnoxious person with you when you change stations. The route coming in does not rid you of your burden. It has even been known that belligerent ladies, shut up in the same cabin on board ship, have exchanged such missiles as sponges, hair-brushes, and powder-puffs before the termination of the voyage.

This is apt to be unpleasant; the husbands usually being drawn in at a later stage of the battle, and official relations rendered strained and painful.

There is, however, this peculiarity about regimental ladies: they will have their great or little differences among themselves, but will combine to hiss like a flock of geese on a common against the outsider who shall assail one of their number, much in the same way as the members of a Scotch family will call each other by the most blood-curdling epithets, but are bound to fall foul,

all at once, of the person who, being "no kin," ventures to doubt the entire sobriety or virtue of any member of the circle.

I remember on one occasion—a nautical one, for the dramatis personæ were grouped on board one of the finest of Her Majesty's troopships—that a certain lady, high in title and position, but not mannered exactly as one is accustomed to find the class of *Verde Vere*, made herself peculiarly obnoxious to the ladies of the regiment, when lo! one breezy afternoon, with a chopping sea, a smart, jaunty little woman, wife of a boy Ensign with nothing but love and his pay for their mutual support, came rushing round to tell of the common enemy's fall:

"My dear, she's dreadfully sick, and her back hair is hanging on a hook on the cabin wall. I saw it!"

The news soon spread; one lady being so violently exhilarated by it, that a convivial glass of sherry was doled out to various favoured ones in her cabin.

What could be limper, or more abjectly flaccid than the condition of the enemy as described by the Ensign's wife? If the back hair in question had been a scalp, taken by her own pretty hands, that little lady could not have been more radiant.

The One Hundred and Ninety-Third were neither better nor worse than other communities of the same kind, and presented the usual variety of character. Old *Musters*, as the much-loved and respected Surgeon-Major of the corps was familiarly called, had a wife with a tongue of flame. A short, squat woman was she, ever eager to tell or to hear some ill-natured thing of somebody. She was always on the look-out for grievances; always imagining herself slighted, or—as she termed it—"put on one side," and spent herself in vain endeavours



to get Musters to see things in the same light. At such moments she would call him by all his names. Harken to her now.

"Geoffrey John Musters, will you stand calmly by and see your wife put upon by an upstart!"

"No, my dear, certainly not, I couldn't think of such a thing; but then, you know, I didn't see it," Geoffrey John replied, yawning behind the sheltering pages of the "British Medical." "I don't think the woman meant any harm—deuced pretty woman, you see, Mrs. M., and all that sort of thing; and fellows will, you know—"

"It was a Friar of orders grey  
Walked forth—to—tell—his—beads."

It was a constant subterfuge on the part of Old Musters to seek cover in song when pestered by his spouse, for Musters was a musical man, and took part in glees on various festive occasions, much to his own delight and the edification of his hearers.

"You shall not put me off with wicked Popish songs, nor yet with improper meas-room observations," retorted Mrs. M. sharply. "We do not make ourselves, and beauty is but skin-deep. It will be all the same a hundred years hence, Dr. Musters—"

"Quite so, quite so, my dear, but it isn't all the same now, you see, and fellows will, you know—"

"Come live with me and be my love;  
Come live with m—e—"

"Really, Dr. Musters, at your time of life and with a bald place beginning to show upon the top of your head, I do think you might hit upon a more suitable song than that."

The doctor, who had laid down his medical paper, and was fidgeting with a lot of glees that lay scattered upon the piano, only went on humming and trolling bits of this music or that; being, in fact, mentally engaged in selecting suitable catches and trios for the next Soldiers' Evening. He found temporary deafness an excellent weapon of defence on such occasions as the present—a relief in throwing his absorbed attention into something quite apart from his Amelia's discourse—that stream of words that was wont to flow on like the river in the song, "for ever and for ever."

But this preoccupation was apt to fail him as a shield, to be swept away, as it were, before the tide of the lady's eloquence, leaving him stranded high and dry.

"It's no use telling me the man didn't

mean it, because he did," said Mrs. Musters, swelling out like a pouter pigeon, as she sat in a round, compact heap on the sofa.

"Then that being so, there is no use discussing the matter any further."

"Who—is—Sylvia? who—is—she,  
That—all—the—swains—adore—her?"

"I expect she was no better than she ought to be, whoever she was," said Mrs. Musters, speaking as might a snapping turtle suddenly endowed with speech.

"Ve-ry likely; but then you see, my dear, she made herself agreeable."

"Which I don't? Very well, Dr. Musters, sneer at your wife, do, and compare her to improper people in improper songs. It's only what I expect and look for"—here the lady became gulpy and tearful—"and I tell you the man did mean to slight me. I saw it in his eye as he crossed the room. Tell me this: am I, or am I not, your wife?"

"Certainly, my dear, certainly, there can be no possible doubt on the subject, with a fal-lal-lal-lal-lay—with a——"

"Geoffrey John Musters, you are not paying the slightest attention to what I say. If I am your wife——"

"Of which, as I said before, there cannot be the slightest possible doubt," put in the doctor, now wearing a penitential air, and turning his back upon the music-strewn piano.

"Then I am entitled to a certain position, and I contend that that position ought to be clearly recognised. That is the worst fault I have to find with the Colonel, as I was saying to Mr. Grimper only the other day——"

"Now, Amelia," said the doctor, his moustache bristling and his eyes full of fire, "how often have I asked you not to discuss the Chief with any of the youngsters? It is such bad form, my dear, to say nothing of the trouble you might make for me if these things came round."

"We live in a free country, I hope, Dr. Musters. This is not Russia, I believe, nor yet Prussia. I am open as the day; I say what I mean, and mean what I say—there is no nonsense about me, and I do say——"

"Don't, Amelia; the Chief has been most kind and courteous to you ever since you—ever since I brought you to the regiment. He may be a bit stern, but he's a just man, and strives to hold the scales evenly."

"All the same, I tell you he took the Paymaster's wife into the room where the

refreshments were laid out, and left me sitting there—plain to be seen, too, for I'd got my new black *moiré* on, and I wasn't likely to hide myself in a corner. But what's the use of me wasting breath like this! You're not one to take up the cudgels for me, I know."

"My dear," said "poor old Musters"—he wasn't old at all, but the fellows used to speak of him like that for pity's sake—throwing himself into a chair, stretching his legs out straight, and looking the picture of abject misery, "what do you expect me to do? I can't go and speak to the Chief about this thing. You don't want me to make myself the laughing-stock of the regiment, do you? The Paymaster's wife is a stranger amongst us; she is the daughter of an old friend of the Colonel's; she is a deuced pretty woman——"

Happily—it may be almost said providentially—at this moment there came a knock at the door, and Ensign Green came in.

"I must say, doctor," he began, after greeting the lady in most courteous manner, "I must say this nose of mine is very tiresome. It won't go down, and there's a what-d'ye-call at"—here Mr. Green fidgeted with his carefully pipe-clayed gloves—he had come straight off duty—and coloured up to the eyes—"a little flare-up, as you may say, at Bajor Henneker's this evening——"

Mrs. Musters bounced about like a parched pea in a bladder.

"What did you say," she put in smartly—"a little 'flare-up'—do you mean a party? Jeff," turning sharply to her husband, "did you know of this? If it's a party, my dear Mr. Green, why are we not asked?"

Here was a dilemma! What could Ensign Green say?

In much confusion he turned his forage-cap round and round, his bruised and swollen nose blushing deeply red.

"I really can't say," he stammered. "The fact is, Lindsay brought me a message from Mrs. Henneker."

"Oh," said Mrs. Musters, "if you are willing to jump at such left-handed invitations as that, it is no business of mine. If there had been regular invitations sent out, I think, Jeff, you will fully agree with me that the fact of our names being omitted——"

The doctor, looking like some baited animal, put his hand to his head, as if his thoughts needed what our Celtic neighbours call "sorting."

"My dear," he said, "people may ask whom they like to their own parties. This is a free country." Then, with a little gesture suggestive of dismissal of the subject, he turned to poor Mr. Green, red and rueful. "My dear fellow," he said, after a prolonged and yearning gaze at that young warrior's countenance, "you will do well to absent yourself from Mrs. Henneker's this evening—that is," with a sly twinkle of the eye, "if you want to make an impression, you know."

Mr. Green blushed still a livelier red; indeed, he glowed all over, so that even his tunic paled its ineffectual fires; for was not the eye of Mrs. Musters fixing him like a bayonet?

"You must have your joke, doctor," he stammered at length. Then, with a certain duplicity, it must be confessed, sad to see in one so young and callow, Mr. Green expressed an ardent hope that he would be "fit" for the Soldiers' Evening. The doctor seized the bait promptly.

"Oh, I hope so," he said; "I hope so. We can't get on without you there; it is not to be thought of."

"You think the fellows will like 'My dabe is Dorval'?" said Mr. Green, much gratified, though indistinct.

"I should think they couldn't very well help themselves," said the doctor. "It is a most impressive piece, and your rendering of it is really delightful."

"It allows of several most striking attitudes," put in Mr. Green reflectively. "I have tried them, you know, in Blizzard's room, and he was much struck; so was his fellow. He dropped Blizzard's boots, and seemed rooted to the spot. 'On the Grampian hills.' Now, there's a point for you. You wave your hand so—an immense distance is indicated—a far-off-ness, so to speak. They'll rise to that, you'll see. Then: 'My father feeds his sheep.' You look round, as if counting your flocks and herds. You're quite the gentle shepherd, you know."

"Capital! Capital!" said the doctor, with enthusiasm. "They'll see the whole thing with their mind's eye, as Shakespeare has it—with their mind's eye."

"I fancy our next evening will be something rather choice," said the other, with a delightful air of complacency; "there's Blizzard's Dying Gladiator, you know—by gad! that'll fetch 'em."

"He's such a shrimp——" objected the doctor.

"But he makes up for it in noise and

force," said Mr. Green. "His groan is tremendous as he sinks lifeless to the ground. By the way, have you heard the man Smith—Colour-Sergeant, number one company, you know—have you heard him sing? There's a tenor for you! Give you my word, he brought the tears into my eyes with 'Dear Heart, Good-bye!' It was immense, you know—there'll be a sensation. I could see Miss—er—Drew—was astonished, though, as we all know, she's not one to say much. We shall have a grand success, doctor, and that's all about it. By the way"—Mr. Green's best remarks were generally slipped in, as it were—"that man Smith, he's immense, you know, and a bit puzzling, eh? He was monstrous good to me this morning when I got knocked over with the—ahem!—heat and all that, and I felt just like saying: 'Thank you, old fellow.' I did, by Jove!"

"It's just as well you didn't act upon the idea," said the doctor drily.

"That's what Chubby remarked. Well, all I can say is, the man's ripping good form—down to the ground."

"The men call him 'Gentleman Jack,'" said the doctor. "Soldiers have such keen intuitions; they feel a thing in a moment, where a civilian would take a month to puzzle it out.—You have come to make enquiries? Well, I'm sorry to say the verdict is bad; nothing but the healing hand of time can restore the manly beauty of our friend here."

This was addressed to two men in mufti, that moment ushered in by the soldier-servant; to wit, Blizzard, and Verrinder—otherwise Chubby.

"Poor old Green!" said both in a breath.

Now Blizzard was Ensign Green's alter ego, and Chubby was the regimental wag, so both are interesting to us. Of the latter many delightful stories were told, treasured up, became regimental chestnuts, were occasionally buried for a while, and then again unearthed for the benefit of some outsider or regimental guest. Perhaps they were not all of them very striking incidents, but a regiment is like a big school in that and many other respects; that which is said or done by any member of it gathers quite a fictitious value, and belonging to "Ours," has all the charm indicated by the words, a poor thing—but mine own.

Chubby, then, was the pride and delight of the Hundred and Ninety-Third, a very

trap and snare for the unwary newly-joined, the terror of those with painfully apparent joints in their armour, the adored of the men, who were attracted by his buoyant, breezy nature and ready kindness. Let it be here set down—he is a sketch from memory, and claims to be justly dealt with—that his powers of drollery were never used against what was good and true; rather did he make a weapon of ridicule and caricature to turn the green youngster from the evils that so easily beset him. Anthony Verrinder, gentleman, Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment of foot—otherwise known as "the Boys of Tipperary"—was what is called as straight as a die; his smile was the most winning you can imagine, his laughter the very essence of mirth. With a certain jovial fierceness in his sturdy personality at times, an immense and somewhat pompous gravity over the smallest details of regimental life, he mingled a sense of the ludicrous—a possible gentleness in time of trouble—a tear rising quickly to his bright blue eye, and was as bright, jolly, and well-beloved a merry man as could well be found among men.

Who had not heard of the celebrated "lost wig" incident—an occurrence that convulsed the regiment for weeks, and was told and re-told in ante-room, quarters, barrack-room, and canteen, till every possible phase of it was exhausted?

There was once upon a time a certain officer sent to do temporary duty with the Hundred and Ninety-Third. He made himself intensely objectionable in every way; gave himself airs that made the other men long to kick him; tried to be free-and-easy to an atrocious extent with people who didn't want him; also, he wore a red wig. His red moustache grew luxuriantly enough, but heaven had dealt less kindly with his scalp. In spite of this defect of nature, his self-conceit was paralysing; he went in for being a lady-killer, and boasted—unpardonable crime—of his "bonnes fortunes." And it came to pass upon a certain day, the regiment lying at anchor in a troopship in beautiful Queenstown Harbour, that the Colonel invited certain sirens, wives and daughters of mighty officials, to come on board and listen to the strains of the Hundred and Ninety-Third string band. The popping of champagne corks, the happy laughter of young voices, made all the scene bright and glad; then the gay company came on deck, leaning over the rail to listen to the

music. As Blizzard observed to a friend, "The Chief was in great form." He, too, was a man who took a vast pride in everything concerning the battalion he commanded; his men, with forage-caps slightly on one side, dandy canes in their hands, and pale facings so dazzlingly bright that they made you blink again, were spoken of as a "smart lot"; his German bandmaster was a genius; to be a proficient on any instrument meant to creep into the Chief's good books; to play out of tune—"Ach!" would cry Herr Schaffenhäusser, "it is to cut my livare straight in two pieces, and for the Colonel, the big words will make my hair to fly upwards."

All, then, were assembled to listen to the band, all save the hero of the red wig, and he was not missed until afterwards. A grand overture set in, Herr Schaffenhäusser's arm worked like the semaphore at a signal station, then waved softly, as though calling down benedictions on his men collectively: "Piano, piano, hu-sh!" Then a frantic gesture, as though calling down vengeance from heaven—this to usher in the great trumpet obligato, for which bandsman Dennis O'Flanigan was so celebrated. A pause, a wild look in O'Flanigan's eye; a mad effort to blow forth mighty sounds from the brazen-throated trumpet; a dull, muffled murmur that made Herr Schaffenhäusser skip like one of the young lambs of old; a big word muttered into the Chief's tawny moustache; more frantic efforts from bandsman O'Flanigan, who grew rapidly red, crimson, blue, and purple in the face, putting the chameleon quite to shame in the matter of changes of complexion; then, "It's the devil himself's got into me instrument, sor," from poor O'Flanigan; an arm thrust down the brazen throat; and, behold, the ginger-coloured wig raised on high, clenched in the bandsman's indignant fist.

Chubby, looking as innocent and infantile as a cherub on a tombstone, stood calmly watching the course of events; heard the Colonel give a resounding order that the perpetrator of this outrage should be instantly detected and brought before him at orderly-room next morning; then plunged into a deep and desperate flirtation, and was blind to all the significant looks of his brother officers, and deaf to the remonstrance of Blizzard, delivered in a whisper at a convenient moment. This was the great lost wig incident, for it crept out subsequently that the owner of that appendage, with his head tied round

with a bandana handkerchief, had been deliriously seeking his wig up and down and round and about, raging at not being able to join the company and make an impression upon Erin's fair daughters. Next morning no allusion was made to the mishap of the day before, nor yet on any other morning. The Chief wore a grim smile at mess, and the obnoxious person reported himself sick, applied for sick-leave, and—was seen no more.

But we are keeping our friends too long waiting in the doctor's snug study, whither the men had adjourned for a smoke and a chat.

"I expect the men will be confined to barracks before we're done," said Blizzard, holding his head far back and watching the grey rings of smoke from his cigarette float upwards.

"The Chief's wide awake, trust him for that," said the doctor. "And I'll back the old regiment to be sound to the core—sound as a bell, sir, sound as a bell. Still, one cannot be too wary."

"When Lindsay and Carbonel were driving back from that dinner at old What's-his-name's, they were ready to take their solemn oath they heard the ring of feet marching—mind you, drilling, not walking—and Lindsay vowed he saw shadows."

At this point Verrinder—it hardly seems fitting to call him Chubby in these supreme moments of his—rose to his feet, full of a monstrous importance and gravity; his moustache bristled, his eyes were round and fierce. He stepped to the window cautiously, as if upon eggs, and softly closed a couple of inches of aperture.

"Pardon the liberty, I take, doctor," he said, "but you cannot tell who may be within earshot. Blizzard, I always tell you, you are an incautious beggar."

"What have I done?" said Blizzard, greatly discomposed. "I appeal to you, doctor—"

"Oh, don't appeal to me," said the doctor, secretly delighted with the whole affair, but looking as grave as a judge. "Chubby is right; one cannot be too careful."

"By gad! I should think not, indeed!" said Chubby, speaking in a blood-curdling whisper. "Treachery is in the very air. How do you know that Mrs. Musters's maid is not a paid spy in the employ of the—ahem! I tell you I trust no one. There was a fellow brought my boots home

this morning from being mended—I thought I caught him taking a bird's-eye view of my room. I fixed him with my eye—you know what I can do in that line, I hope—give you my word, he shrank up, he cowered, he got white about the gills—bet you any money he was one of—ahem!”

“Bless my soul!” said poor Blizzard. “Are things as bad as that?”

“Pooh! That's nothing,” said the doughty warrior on his left. “We live on a volcano. H-u-s-h! I am afraid even of the echo of my own words. Mum's the word—but, take my word for it, those who live longest will see most.”

Green and Blizzard were deeply impressed by this view of the case.

The doctor stroked his moustache vigorously, but his kindly blue eyes were as grave as an owl's.

As the three men went out, Blizzard hung back to say mysteriously, and, as it were, behind his hand:

“He'll make a diplomat and general both in one, will Chubby, one of these days. He's immense, you know—simply immense!”

Then the doctor went in, and might have been heard in the verandah, carolling like a cheery old bird:

“Who is Sylvia, who—is—she,  
That all the swains—commend her?”

### EQUINOCTIALS AND OTHER STORMS.

THERE is not much to choose between a gale from the south-west and a gale from the north-east. They are both lusty quarters, and it depends upon the lie of the land whether you prefer the one or the other. Here in England it seems as if the south-westers visited us in the greater force; yet the coasts of Yorkshire and Northumberland have their tales to tell which might make even the coasts of Cornwall acknowledge that the genius of the north-east wind is a very wild sprite.

The writer has in his memory various experiences of rough weather from both these quarters. He has slept at Cape Wrath, with a storm from the north-east raging outside the lighthouse and making such infernal music as he does not wish to hear again. The wonder was that he slept at all. Yet after a while the screeching of the voice of the wind acted as a lullaby. To be sure it entered into the

composition of the dreams which ensued, and made them anything but pastoral and tranquillising. Nevertheless, it was sleep of a sort, for which gratitude was distinctly due.

More sensational than this was a long-protracted storm in the Faroes a few years ago. It blew up in the tail of a thick fog which had mantled those bleak hyperborean isles for two or three days, and made navigation much more of a peril than it is even in moderate weather in their rough latitudes. There are no signal stations here studded about the basalt cliffs to warn local mariners. Consequently the Faroes have to depend upon instinct and their own judgement in avoiding the sudden squalls of their seas. But on this occasion the storm came without warning, and took toll of lives that could ill be spared in the small community. The little harbour of Thorshavn was in furious turmoil for about fifty hours. The vessels from Norway and Spain that were unloading timber and taking in salt fish needed all their cables to keep them from breaking loose and being dashed on the rugged strand, where the black-faced little houses are built almost in the surf of the North Atlantic. As for life in Thorshavn during this riot, it was about as severe a test for the nerves as can be imagined. The roar of the sea was unintermittent. The waves tossed themselves upon the little town in broad masses of spray, and the nether streets ran sea-water as if they were brook-beds. At night, too, it was decidedly noisy. The writer's little window received wave after wave against its shutters, and each shock made the house seem to reel. It was like being at sea, only with, perhaps, rather less sense of security. If the Thorshavn house had really given way, it would have been a bad business for the residents. The reflux of the waves would probably have carried the wreckage, and men, women, and children into the midst of the seething bay, where destruction would have been inevitable.

Such autumnal experiences as this are not uncommon in Faroe, but it is rare that an Englishman is to be found in the archipelago at the time. The prudent tourist has by then withdrawn to the South with his gun, fishing-rod, and portmanteau. The long winter of the North is not inviting to the stranger, whether in prospect or in reality.

In contrast with this particular north-easter, a certain storm from the south-west

last year in the Mediterranean may be mentioned. At this time of day one need not inform the world that extremely wild weather often comes to this inland sea. In fact, the writer has been in as much peril in the "mare calum" as in the North Atlantic. The storm in question stole upon us when we were off the west coast of Sardinia, bound from Algeria to Corsica. It was surprising how soon the sea changed from the placidity of the morning to a roughness that made even hardened travellers uneasy. All through the latter part of the afternoon the wind seemed to worsen. We pitched tremendously. It was as much as a novice's bones were worth to attempt to move without holding on to something. And it was under these conditions, with the squall still tearing about us, and in a blinding downpour of rain, that we buffeted our way with extreme caution into the exposed port of Ajaccio, where the waves were breaking magnificently over the road which curves with the bay towards the red-roofed railway station.

Though nearly midnight when we were got ashore, drenched with sea-water and rain, and with splitting headaches, it was hard to resist the temptation to join a number of the Ajacciots who were enjoying, in their own somewhat grim, taciturn manner, the grandeur of the sea. The spray flew dozens of feet into the air against the granite pier, even where this was protected from the full force of the storm. The noise was like that of the firing of a succession of big cannon.

Here, too, the storm did not rage itself into extinction very quickly. The following day was ominous all through. The clouds lay low down the mountain-sides, inky black save where they clung to the verdure near the town. The whole of the great gulf was in the wildest agitation; huge waves chasing each other towards the land, against which their strength seemed united. On the north shore of the gulf in particular the surf was superb. It swept over the white tombs which diversify the road to the Bloody Isles at the extremity of the headland; and a man had to hold his breath at times to fight his way from Ajaccio in their direction. Corsica is not upon the whole a cheerful country; its traditions and its people are, in fact, steeped in dolour. But there never was a day which seemed more thoroughly in harmony with the island and its inhabitants. The statue of Napoleon in one of Ajaccio's public

places, facing the Mediterranean, though in ever so commanding an attitude, had no effect upon the self-willed sea. It received its volleys of spray like the rest of the town in its vicinity.

Only the other day, too, the writer made the acquaintance of a south-westerly storm in those bold little islands of Scilly which have seen such sad havoc done upon shipping by the Atlantic winds. At no time are the Scillies supremely fascinating. They lie low and they boast of but scant vegetation, save in one or two notoriously sheltered nooks. The narcissi and daffodils they send to Covent Garden in spring are grown behind tall screens of the Scilly elm, matting, or wreck timber. Without these allies the Atlantic gales would give the flowers no chance. But under a spell of wild weather the isles get very depressing. The harbour of St. Mary's, the capital, is then likely to be crowded with luggers from Penzance, and Sennen, and St. Ives, which have run hither in response to the admonitions of the local meteorological station. The fishermen and lads idle about the streets in top-boots and oilskins, freely declaring their impatience at the detention. The wind howls as unmercifully here as elsewhere, and with as large a compass of sound. And upon the cruel, gnarled granite rocks of the archipelago the sea lashes itself into foam with unfeigned fury. Off Peninnis Head, on the south side of St. Mary's, under such conditions there is always something grand to see. One does not need to be reminded that it was hereabouts that Sir Cloudesley Shovel came drowned to shore nearly two centuries ago, and that it was in just such a gale that many another good man has gone beneath the Atlantic in sight of these dreadful little islands. The words "drowned at sea" are on many of the tombstones in the Scilly churchyards; and the south-west wind is accountable for not a few of these inscriptions.

Chief of all, however, we remember a squall from this same strong quarter when steaming from Savannah to New York one winter's day. The ship was lightly laden, and the ship's officers seemed to have forgotten to look at the barometer. This fell with remarkable suddenness. We were steaming quietly northwards, with two or three sails set, when, almost without a sound of warning, the squall hissed from the land against us. It would tax the most accomplished of pens adequately to

describe the scene that ensued in the next two or three minutes. We were nearly broadside over upon the sea in an instant, what with the force of the gust and our lack of ballast. It seemed doubtful if the ship would recover its poise. However, it did so; and with all speed the men were sent to the sails. Yet once again we were driven with sickening precision towards the horizon level. Those of us who had nothing to grip were of course laid flat, and were lucky to have their slide seawards arrested in any way. And this time it seemed even more doubtful if we should regain our vertical attitude. But fortune favoured us, and afterwards, the sails having been reefed, we could talk lightly enough of what was really something a good deal graver than a joke.

It is not only at sea that one can estimate fairly the force of these storms that rush across the oceans. At any of our coast towns some strong experiences may be enjoyed—though often the enjoyment is much tempered by the realisation of peril for those who are more exposed to Nature's mad moods than we ourselves.

You will find few places in England more suggestive on this count in times of gale than the island of Anglesey. Its western shore line is broken into a number of sequestered caves and ravines, the steep rocks of which are draped for hundreds of feet with a tapestry of ivy interwoven with honeysuckle, gorse, foxgloves, and brambles. On a mild sunny day the buzzing of the bees will out-shout the summer babble of the sea on the near sands or shingle, and from the glowing heather and high bracken stretching between the cliffs inland, dozens of white-tailed rabbits may be sent scampering forth at a cry. But in the depths of this or that gully, which looks as if it had never before been visited by man, you shall see entire masts of ships, bronzed and barnacled, lying among a wreck of barrels, bits of figure-heads, casks, corks, and bones. The lighthouse of the Skerries five or six miles out at sea stands on guard night and day, and these fragments of ruin are blown past it as if they laughed at it.

With a south-west storm one may do worse than battle one's way to Aberffraw, on this island, and taste the spray in the air. It is an unassuming hamlet on the coast, between Bangor and Holyhead, and exists with difficulty in the face of the whirlwinds of sand which the gales blow against it from the sea. The view of the Welsh mountains from the oat-fields above

this village cannot be matched anywhere. The Cambrian hills are, indeed, the chief grace of Anglesey. Though they are not on it they distinctly animate, as they domineer over, the island. Involuntarily one wonders why such a glorious spot as Aberffraw is so benighted and forsaken. Under the hands of a body of spirited capitalists, it seems as if it might be made a watering-place of unique attraction. But the south-west wind is its ruin. The all-suffusing, encroaching sand would have to be met with an energy as persistent as its own.

Here at Aberffraw for centuries the old kings of Wales had their residence. Their title, "Princeps de Aberffraw et Dominus de Snaudun," had peculiar force, situated, as they were, where Snowdon seems to encompass the whole land with its look. But when Llewellyn died in 1282, Aberffraw's good days were over, and ever since it has languished towards decay. The railway has no need of it, and leaves it to die a death it will not help to delay. The name "Palace Gardens," still applied to a part of it, and an inn called "The Prince Llewellyn," are all that keep it in mind of its vanished greatness.

A pedestrian going from Aberffraw to Newborough may flatter himself that he is having a taste of the trials of life in the Sahara. The track is feebly indicated for a space by the presence on either side of some sand hillocks; but every foot-mark or wheel-rut is surely wiped out, half an hour after it is made, by the shifting molecules which rise before the gentlest zephyrs, and in a breeze fill the air and gyrate with a pretty though somewhat frantic affectation of an African sand-storm. If less sand were whisked from the shore into the interior, one might say many words in praise of the Bay of Aberffraw and its neighbour, Malldraeth Bay. But a walk of a few miles on such unstable material reduces one's enthusiasm about fine open sandy expanses, methodically lapped by the waves of the sea. It is surmised that the Welsh king who first made Aberffraw a royal residence was attracted by these very sands. He held them to be a bulwark, landwards and seawards, strong enough to baffle any human enemy. The very river whence Aberffraw gets its name (ffraw, "the rushing," Aber, "river") has had its characteristic choked out of it.

There is one noticeable feature about high winds. They seem to carry with them a most undeniable censure upon our

methods of clothing ourselves. Can anything, for instance, be more ridiculous than the Brighton Esplanade under a spell of the "equinoctials"? We mortals do not seem endowed with much of that dignity and grace we claim to have, when we are clutching at our hats and bonnets, and our garments are belled this way and that to our most manifest discomposure. At such times Dame Nature lifts up her hand against civilisation and gives it a smart humiliating buffet.

Look at an uncultured savage—he may still be found in the East—under the like visitation. He holds himself erect, and is the more majestic for the strain to which his mother, Nature—more of a step-dam to us—is subjecting him. He breathes the more sturdily, and his muscles are invigorated by the unwonted call upon them. Like as not, the wall of the tempest sets him singing. He has no anxieties about his legs and head-gear, and quaffs the storm as we quaff champagne.

The ordinary landsman commonly gets his storm at second-hand. He is not, as the mariner often is, in the very circle of its brewing. For him the first note of it is the whistling in his chimney in the night, and perhaps the banging of a door inconsiderately left open. If he is in the country, he does get a taste of its effects at sea, in the orchestra of the wind in the trees. That is a fine stimulating music denied to most townsmen. But landsmen of both kinds learn more about storms from the newspapers than from actual experience. They may see a tree uprooted once in a way, or be within a hair's breadth of injury from a falling slate. For the rest, they turn to the "casualty" column in the journal, and read of shipwrecks with as impersonal a feeling as if the events happened in the planet of Mars.

We landsmen in our temperate latitudes are fortunate in being able to regard a storm as an agreeable interlude of common existence rather than aught else. Elsewhere, people fly to their storm cellars, and cannot tell whether in half an hour they will be still living or dead.

### "THERE'S RUE FOR YOU."

NOT very long ago\* we examined the magic properties of Rosemary, the super-

\* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, December, 1891, "About Rosemary."

stitions attaching to it, and the references both to plant and customs to be found in the old poets and writers. In the course of our enquiry we came upon certain references to Rue, which we propose now to follow up, as much interest attaches to this pretty garden shrub, otherwise known in olden times as Herb-of-Grace.

Now, why did Ophelia say: "There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we may call it herb grace o' Sundays, for you must wear your rue with a difference"? For the same reason that Perdita says, in "The Winter's Tale," when welcoming the guests of her reputed father and the shepherd:

Reverend Sirs,  
For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep  
Seeming and savour all the winter long;  
Grace and remembrance be to you both,  
And welcome to our shearing.

Remembrance, as we have already seen, was symbolised by the rosemary, and by both Ophelia and Perdita the rue is taken as the symbol of grace. How this came to be we shall presently see; but perhaps Mr. Ellacombe—"Plant-Lore of Shakespeare"—is stretching rather far when he explains that the rue was implied by Antony, when he said to the weeping followers—"Antony and Cleopatra," Act IV. Scene 2:

Grace grow where these drops fall.

What Ophelia said was: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance, pray, love, remember; and there is pansies, that's for thought. There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me. We may call it herb-grace o' Sundays; O you may wear your rue with a difference."

There was a method in her madness, and she was distributing her flowers according to the characters and moods of the recipients. Fennel, for instance, emblemised flattery, and columbine ingratitude. Rue emblemised either remorse or repentance—either sorrow or grace—so "you may wear your rue with a difference."

So we find the gardener in "Richard II." saying, after the departure of the Queen:

Here she did fall a tear; here in this place  
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace;  
Rue even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen,  
In the remembrance of a weeping Queen.

The herb was believed to be endowed with high moral and medicinal properties, yet was supposed to prosper better in one's garden if stolen from that of a neighbour. But originally it was associated with



sorrow and pity. The word rue is doubtless of the same root as "ruth," and to rue is to be sorry for, to have remorse. Ruth is the English equivalent of the Latin "ruta," and in early English appeared as "rude." As regret is always more or less a mark of repentance, it was the most natural thing in the world for the herb of ruth, or sorrow, to become the herb of repentance; and as repentance is a sign of grace, so "rue" became known as "herb of grace." This, in brief, is the connection, but so far as we know, rue is only once mentioned in the Bible, and then only along with a number of other bitter herbs, and without any special significance.

There is this association between rue and rosemary, that both are natives of some of the more barren coasts of the Mediterranean, and that both were very early admitted to the English herb-garden. The old herbalists make frequent mention of rue, and even in Anglo-Saxon times it seems to have been extensively used in medicine. Three peculiarities—a strong, aromatic smell, a bitter taste, and a blistering quality in the leaves—were quite sufficient to establish it in the pharmacopœia of the herb-doctors.

The curative qualities of what Spenser calls the "ranke-smelling rue" were reputedly of a very varied sort. Most people will remember the reference in "Paradise Lost":

Michael from Adam's eyes the film removed  
Which the false fruit which promised clearer sight  
Had bred; then purged with euphrasie and rue  
The visual nerve, for he had much to see.

And perhaps its most popular use was as an eye-wash. The old writers have recorded some hidden virtues known only to the animal world, such as that weasels prepared themselves for a rat-fight by a diet of rue. Old Parkinson, the herbalist, says that "without doubt it is a most wholesome herb, although bitter and strong." He speaks of a "bead-rowl" of the virtues of rue, but warns people of the "too frequent or over-much use thereof."

As both a stimulant and narcotic the plant has even now recognised virtues, although we are not aware that it is much used in modern medicine. The Italians are said to eat the leaves in salad, but hardly of that species—"Ruta montana"—which botanists say it is dangerous to handle without gloves. Our garden species is "Ruta graveolens," and is used by the French perfumers in the manufacture of "Thieves'

Vinegar," or "Marseilles Vinegar," once accounted an effective protection against fevers and all infectious diseases.

A curious instance of the value of the herb in this respect occurred in 1760. In the summer of that year a rumour arose, and rapidly spread in London, that the plague had broken out in St. Thomas's Hospital. Immediately there was what would nowadays be called a "boom" in rue, the price of which rose forty per cent. in a single day in Covent Garden. To allay the popular alarm a manifesto was issued, signed by the physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries of the hospital, certifying that there were no other than the "usual" diseases among the patients in the wards.

Another explanation of the origin of the name "herb-of-grace" has been given than that referred to above. Warburton, among others, thinks that the name was adopted because the old Romanists used the plant on Sundays in their "exorcisms." However this may be, rue, or the herb of grace, has been in this country long accounted an antidote of witchcraft. But then, if Hone is right, so it was in the days of Aristotle, before it became "herb of grace," and when it was hung round the neck as an amulet.

Through its numerous reputed properties, rue early found its way into the magic cauldron.

Then sprinkles she the juice of rue,  
With nine drops of the midnight dew,  
From lunar distilling,

as Drayton has it. In this incantation, again, we have the association with moonwort—lunary—and the connection is further illustrated in an old oracle ascribed to Hecate: "From a root of wild rue fashion and polish a statue; adorn it with household lizards; grind myrrh, gum, and frankincense with the same reptiles, and let the mixture stand in the air during the waning of a moon; then address your words."

With regard to the association with moonwort, it is interesting to recall that this is one of the plants supposed to be employed by birds for opening nests and removing impediments. Thus in an anecdote gravely related by Aubrey, we find this virtue mentioned: "Sir Bennet Hoskins told me that his keeper at his parke at Morehampton, in Herefordshire, did for experiment's sake drive an iron nail thwart the hole of a woodpecker's nest, there being a tradition that the dam will bring some leafe to open it. He layed at

the bottom of the tree a cleane sheet, and before many houres passed, the naille came out, and he found a leafe lying by it on the sheete. They say the Moonwort will doe such things."

On the same subject Coles the botanist writes: "It is said, yea, and believed, that Moonwort will open the locks wherewith dwelling-houses are made fast, if it be put into the keyhole." And Culpepper, the herbalist, writes thus: "Moonwort is a herb which—they say—will open locks and unshoe such horses as tread upon it. This some laugh to scorn, and these no small fools neither; but country people that I know call it Unshoe-the-horse. Besides, I have heard commanders say that on White Down in Devonshire, near Tiverton, there were found thirty horseshoes pulled off from the feet of the Earl of Essex's horses, being there drawn up in a body, many of them being newly shod, and no reason known, which caused much admiration." As well it might! This power of the moonwort is said by Mr. Hilderic Friend to be still believed in in Normandy, and a similar virtue was also allotted to the vervain and the mandrake, both associated with rue.

This curious property of moonwort it is which is referred to in "Divine Weekes" thus:

Horses that, feeding on the grassy hills,  
Tread upon moonwort with their hollow heels,  
Though lately shod, at night go bare-foot home,  
Their maister musing where their shoes become.  
O moonwort! tell me where thou hid'st the smith,  
Hammer and pinchers, thou unshoddest them with.  
Alas! what lock or iron engine is't  
That can the subtle secret strength resist?  
Still the best farrier cannot set a shoe  
So sure but thou, so shortly, canst undo.

The old alchemists, however, had a more profitable use for moonwort than the unshoeing of horses; they employed it for converting quicksilver into pure silver—at a time when that metal was neither "degraded" nor "depreciated."

There is an old and pleasant belief, of which John Ruskin makes effective use in driving home one of his morals, that flowers always bloom best in the gardens of those who love them. One could easily find a rationalistic explanation of this sentiment, of course, but we have seen somewhere mentioned a superstition to the effect that wherever the moonwort flourishes the owner of the garden is honest. Whether this superstition is widespread or of ancient date, we have been unable to ascertain.

The ingredients thrown into the mystic

cauldron by European sorcerers were in close imitation of those of the ancient alchemists. Moncure Conway has pointed out that among the ingredients used by English and Scotch witches were plants gathered, as in Egypt, at certain seasons or phases of the moon. Chief among such plants were rue and vervain. The Druids called vervain the "Holy herb," and gathered it when the dog-star rose, placing a sacrifice of honey in the earth from which they removed it.

In old Greece and Rome vervain was sacred to the god of war, and in Scandinavia it was also sacred to Thor. It was, moreover, carried by ambassadors of peace, and was supposed to preserve from lightning any house decorated with it. In later times we find that a decoction of vervain and rue, mixed, had such a remarkable effect on gun-metal that any one using a gun over which the liquid had been poured would shoot as straight as a die.

Had this belief, one may wonder, anything to do with the special effect on the eye always supposed to be possessed by rue? Its virtue as an eye-salve, at any rate, may explain how it came to be regarded as capable of bestowing the "second sight." To this day, in the Tyrol it is still believed to confer fine vision. If hallucinations were, as Moncure Conway assumes, the basis of belief in second sight, then we can understand the reputed virtues of rue in its narcotic qualities. We have explained how it came to be called "herb of grace," but some think it got this name through being used in witchcraft by exorcists to try the devil.

Speculating on why herbs and roots should have been esteemed magical, Mr. Andrew Lang concludes that it is enough to remember that herbs really have medicinal properties, and that untutored people invariably confound medicine with magic. Thus it was easy to suppose that a plant possessed virtue not only when swallowed, but when carried in the hand. The same writer examines the theory that rue was the Homeric moly—which in a former article we identified with the mandrake. But Lang rejects the theory, and says that rue was called "herb of grace" and was used for sprinkling holy water because in pre-Christian times it had been supposed to have effect against the powers of evil. The early Christians were thus just endeavouring to combine the old charm of rue with the new potency of holy water.

"Euphrasy and rue," says Lang, "were

employed to purge and purify mortal eyes. Pliny is very learned about the magical virtues of rue. Just as the stolen potato is sovrain for rheumatism, so 'rue stolen thriveth the best.' The Samoans think that their most valued vegetables were stolen from heaven by a Samoan visitor. It is remarkable that rue, according to Pliny, is killed by the touch of a woman, in the same way as, according to Josephus, the mandrake is tamed."

Although we find rue in the witches' cauldron, we also find it as a popular specific against the blight of witchcraft. Concerning this, however, Moncure Conway says that "the only region on the Continent where any superstition concerning rue is found resembling the form it assumed in England as affecting the eye, is in the Tyrol, where it is one of five plants—the others being broom-straw, agrimony, maidenhair, and ground-ivy—which are bound together, and believed, if carried about, to enable the bearer to see witches, or if laid over the door, to keep any witch who shall seek to enter fastened on the threshold." In Scandinavia and North Germany, St. John's wort was used in much the same way for the same purpose.

As to the vervain, which we have seen associated with rue, this is a plant the use of which against witchcraft was more widely distributed, just as its medical virtues were also more extensively known. The vervain, indeed, was a sacred plant among the Greeks, as well as among the Druids, who gathered it with solemn religious ceremonies, as they did the sacred mistletoe. Vervain was most esteemed, however, as a love potion, but the connection between its virtues in this respect, and its power over witches and spirits of evil, we must not attempt to trace here.

We speak of vervain in connection with rue, because it was the "holy herb," just as rue was the "herb of grace." Not only was the vervain sacred among the early Druids, but it acquired an early sanctity among Christians. Thus the legend runs:

All hail, thou holy herb, vervain,  
Growing on the ground;  
On the Mount of Calvary  
There wast thou found;  
Thou helpest many a grief,  
And staunchest many a wound;  
In the name of sweet Jesu  
I lift thee from the ground.

Mr. Thistleton Dyer says that a wreath of vervain is now presented to newly-married brides in Germany, but whether

this is a survival of the sanctity of the plant or of its ancient reputation as a love philtre and charm, we are unable to say.

It is to be feared that vervain has sadly fallen out of favour in this country, although not many years ago a pamphlet was written to recommend the wearing of vervain, tied by white satin ribbon round the neck, as preservative against evil influences and infection.

"On the Continent"—rather a wide term—Mr. Hilderic Friend says, "the three essential plants for composing a magic wreath are rue, crane's-bill, and willow." The crane's-bill is the Herb Robert, or Robin Hood, and the willow has always been connected with lovers. Such a wreath, then, is made by lovers when they wish to see their "fate." Love-sick maidens will employ such a wreath to find out how long they have yet to remain single. They walk backwards towards some selected tree, and as they walk throw the wreath over their heads until it fastens on one of the branches. Failure to "catch on" requires another backward walk, and so on—each failure to buckle the tree counting as a year of spinsterhood. It seems rather an awkward way of getting at the future, but if not more blind than other processes of love divination, would at least require the guarantee of the absence of tight-lacing among the maidens practising it.

Aristotle mentions the use made by the Greeks of rue, as a charm against evil spirits, and he accounts for it, somewhat singularly, by the habit of the Greeks in not sitting down to table with strangers. The explanation is that when they ate with strangers they were apt to become excited and nervous, and so to eat too rapidly, with the result of flatulence and indigestion. These effects were equivalent to bewitchment, as, indeed, disorders of the digestive organs are frequently regarded by many Eastern peoples even to this day. As rue was found to be an effectual antidote to these distressing symptoms, it became a charm against enchantment.

Among many old-wife recipes for the cure of warts is the use of rue. Most people know the old folk-jingle:

Ashen tree, ashen tree,  
Pray bury these warts of me.

which has to be accompanied by the thrust of a pin into the bark of the tree. The idea was doubtless to extract the sap, for the application of thistle-juice and the

juice of the ranunculus are said to prove efficacious in removing warts. In Devonshire they use the juice of an apple, but in some parts of the country rue is preferred. Other wart-curing plants are the spurge, the poppy, the celandine, the marigold, the briony, and the crowfoot.

As old Michael Drayton remarked :

In medicine, simples had the power  
That none need then the planetary hour  
To help their workinge, they so juiceful were.

To this day the French peasants believe that the curative properties of vervain are most pronounced when the plant is gathered, with proper invocations, at a certain phase of the moon.

The notion that animals are acquainted with the medical properties of plants is an old one—probably older than either Pliny or Aristotle. Our own Gerard, the herbalist, tells that the name celandine was given to that flower, which Wordsworth loved, from a word meaning swallow, because it is used by swallows to "restore sight to their young ones when their eyes be put out." Then Coles, the old botanist, also writes : "It is known to such as have skill of nature, what wonderful care she hath of the smallest creatures, giving to them a knowledge of medicine to help themselves, if haply diseases are among them. The swallow cureth her dim eyes with Celandine : the wesell knoweth well the virtue of Herb Grace : the dove the verven : the dogge dischargeth his mawe with a kind of grass : and too long it were to reckon up all the medicines which the beasts are known to use by nature's direction only."

A Warwickshire proverb runs :

Plant your sage and rue together,  
The sage will grow in any weather,

the meaning of which is not very clear. But that is a common complaint with rhymed proverbs. Another rhyme, however, in which rue appears, has a more practical note :

What savour is better, if physicke be true,  
For places infected than wormwood and rue ?

Rue, indeed, seems to have been in special request as a disinfectant long before "Carbolic" was invented, or "Condy" heard of, yet, perhaps, containing the germ of the idea contained in "Sanitas." For disinfecting purposes wormwood and rue were used sometimes together, and sometimes separately.

The connection between plants and heraldic badges is often close, and although we do not find rue frequent in heraldry,

one curious instance of it is interesting. In 809 an Order was created whereof the collar was made of a design in thistles and rue—the thistle because "being full of prickles is not to be touched without hurting the skin," rue because it "is good against serpents and poison."

Here we have a suggestion of the lizards of the old oracle quoted above.

## A RUBBER OR TWO.

"THE man's only a visitor—a complete stranger to the club!"

"It's to be hoped he'll remain a stranger."

"To my mind his conduct looks uncommonly like insolence."

"It is certainly presumptuous. I suppose it will be allowed that we have played whist before Mr. Cramp arrived."

"Played whist! Good Heavens! I played whist, sir, before I was breeched! The Penfolds have been a whist-playing family for generations. My mother played whist, and her mother! I myself am sixty-three years old, and I beg leave to state that I have lost as much money and made as much money, at whist, as any man of my means in England!"

"I don't pretend to have had your experience, General, but I have always been under the impression that I have some rudimentary notions of the game."

"Of course you have! And so's the Admiral!" General Penfold turned towards Admiral Glover. He raised his voice to a roar. "Haven't you, Admiral!"

The Admiral was sitting in an attitude indicative of dejection. He rubbed his hands together.

"I should like to have a rubber."

Mr. Bowman leaned over towards the Admiral, and explained, in a crescendo scale.

"The General was asking if you had any idea of the rudiments of whist."

"Yes, a rubber at whist. But there are only three of us."

The Admiral looked round the room, as if he were searching for a fourth. The General glared at him.

"The old beggar gets deaf every day." He thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. "It's the craze of the day, the desire to teach your grandmother. But, hang me if I ever thought it was going to come to whist!"

"Only a visitor, too!"

"I've played whist in this club for over

fifteen years, and I've never been so sat upon before. Why, if there's any rules in whist which every tyro knows, it is the rule which tells you that you're to return your partner's lead. When, the other night, I had this man Cramp for a partner, he never returned my lead except once! And then, why on earth he did it I don't know."

"When I was playing with him," plaintively commented Mr. Bowman, "he trumped my trick. I have always understood that to trump your partner's trick is not a commendable thing to do. Yet, when at the end of the hand I pointed out to him what he had done, he appeared to be quite surprised to find that I thought he had done anything wrong."

"And then the way in which he plays his trumps! When you're strong in trumps, play 'em. Why, I've seen him lead trumps when he had a singleton, and stick to them like glue when he had six in hand."

"Have you noticed how the man's a walking book-case?"

"I should think he's in the trade. Confound him, he's got a book in every pocket. I've played whist all my life, and I never so much as looked at a book. I don't go in for theory, but practice."

"Of course!"

"His long-winded words and scientific balderdash stick in my throat. I play good old-fashioned English whist! I've played good old-fashioned English whist all my life! I mean to play good old-fashioned English whist until I die! It's good enough for me. You can take your twiddle-twaddle new theories, and your American bunkum, to somebody who likes that kind of thing. I don't."

"Just so." A voice was heard on the stairs. "Here's Mills."

"Confound Mills! The man doesn't know a club from a spade." The door opened. Mr. Mills came in. "Hollo, Mills, you're just the man we want. Come and make up the rubber."

Mr. Mills declined.

"Thank you, General. You know I'm no player. But here is Mr. Cramp."

Mr. Cramp came in. He was willing.

"I shall be delighted."

Silence followed. The General and Mr. Bowman looked at each other. Then they looked at Mr. Cramp. Mr. Cramp seemed to be quite unconscious of their scrutiny. He seated himself at a table. He said:

"I am spoiling for a game."

The General and Mr. Bowman advanced towards the table. As they went, the General whispered into Mr. Bowman's ear:

"In for it, by gad!"

They seated themselves. The Admiral brought up the rear. They cut for partners. The General and Mr. Bowman cut together.

"As we sit," the General chuckled.

"You remember, General," remarked Mr. Cramp, "that discussion I had with you on leading from five, headed by a series of four. I have here 'Bane on the Penultimate'—"

Mr. Cramp produced a little book from an inner pocket of his coat.

"It is my deal," interposed Mr. Bowman. "I think I cut the lowest."

The General assented without so much as a sign. Mr. Cramp went on:

"It is a valuable little work. He says here, on page eleven, referring to the leads from fives, not trumps—"

"Will you cut to me, Mr. Cramp?"

Mr. Cramp cut to Mr. Bowman, and then continued:

"Here is the hand. Hearts trumps. King, ten, five of hearts. Ten, seven of spades. Ace, queen, knave of diamonds. Queen, knave, ten, nine, and four of clubs."

"Knave of clubs." Mr. Bowman faced the trump. "Would you mind taking up your cards, Mr. Cramp?"

"Eh—one—one moment. I—I should like just to tell you what Bane says."

"Couldn't you tell us what Bane says after the rubber?"

"I should very much like to get you one of these little works, General. Or perhaps I might be able to get one for the club. They are rather expensive, but I think if I were to try—"

"Are you in the book trade, Mr. Cramp?"

"The book trade! What makes you think that?"

"You seem so anxious, sir, that I should purchase books which are absolutely devoid of interest to me."

"It's your lead, Admiral!" roared Mr. Bowman behind his hand.

The Admiral led. The game progressed. Some rather peculiar play was seen. Mr. Cramp and his partner were a little at loggerheads. Mr. Cramp played his game, the Admiral played his. The result was that, though they had a little the best of the cards, their adversaries scored two by tricks. Mr. Cramp endeavoured to observe on this as the Admiral began to deal.

"Didn't you notice my call?" he enquired of his partner.

The Admiral dealt calmly on.

"Didn't you notice my call?" he repeated a little louder.

Still the Admiral dealt. Mr. Bowman's countenance wore a bland smile.

"You'll have to shout if you want to make him hear," he said.

"Didn't you notice my call?" yelled Mr. Cramp.

The Admiral, suddenly alive to the fact that some one was addressing him, fumbled with the cards as he turned his attention to his partner.

"Fall! No, I heard nothing about your fall. Did you hurt yourself?"

Every one smiled—but Mr. Cramp. That gentleman realised what it is to be afflicted.

"He—he seems very deaf," he said.

No one took the remark as addressed to himself. The Admiral went on dealing. The turn-up fell to Mr. Bowman.

"Misedeal," that gentleman remarked.

"You put the Admiral out by shouting at him, Mr. Cramp."

Mr. Cramp looked a little green.

"A man is rather handicapped who has a partner who is as deaf as a post."

The Admiral, who seemed nonplussed at the result of his labours, was staring at the cards as they lay on the table. The General was preparing to take his turn.

"You see, Mr. Cramp," continued Mr. Bowman, "the Admiral has played whist all his life, and, perhaps, thinks he knows a little about it. Possibly he does, if he is left alone."

Mr. Cramp put up his eyebrows. He smiled.

"Don't you think that it is possible for a man to have played whist all his life, and yet to know very little about it after all?"

"Scarcely, if he is an educated man, and has played with educated men."

"But suppose those educated men have been educated in everything else but whist?"

Mr. Bowman shrugged his shoulders. The General laid down the pack of cards with which he was about to deal.

"Excuse me, Bowman, but if we're going to have a discussion on first principles I propose that we adjourn. If we're going to play whist, let's play whist."

"Yes," sighed Mr. Cramp, "let's play whist."

The result of the hand was even more disastrous to himself and his partner than the first had been. By scoring the three odd tricks their opponents were enabled to announce a treble. This dire catastrophe

seemed to cause the Admiral some searchings of heart.

"Why," he asked of Mr. Cramp, "didn't you return my lead?"

"What lead?"

For once the Admiral seemed keen of hearing.

"I led a club."

"I wished to establish my spades. I had seven. If you had acted on my signal we should have had the game at our mercy."

The Admiral turned to the General.

"What's he say? If he'd returned my lead I should have made my ace and queen of clubs."

Mr. Cramp leaned over the table.

"I wish you'd let me persuade you to get 'Cole on Whist.'"

"Books again!" growled the General.

"My dear General, when a man tells me that he cares nothing for what he calls 'book whist,' I ask myself—and I sometimes ask him—if he thinks it possible to acquire a science by merely getting by heart, parrot fashion, a number of obsolete and actually erroneous traditions."

The General seemed to choke back something which was in his throat.

"Whose deal?" he demanded.

"Mine," said Mr. Cramp.

"Then deal."

Mr. Cramp dealt. When the hand had been played, it was found that Pelion had been piled upon Ossa. With three by tricks and the honours the General and his associate scored another treble off the reel. Two trebles and the rub was a pleasant commencement of the evening's play. Nor was the pleasure lessened, from the loser's point of view, by the fact that the cards had not been by any means so one-sided as the result suggested.

By this time several other persons had entered the room. No one attempted to start another rubber, but quite a little crowd clustered round the table to watch the one which was already in progress. The process of cutting for partners was followed with interest, interest which was not lessened when it was observed that the order of play was disarranged, and that Mr. Cramp was cast with the General.

"Have you been thinking about what I said to you the other night about the call?" enquired Mr. Cramp of his partner, as he took the seat which Mr. Bowman had vacated.

"About what?"

As he put the question the General's bearing was that of a broomstick, with a head on top.

"The call. I have here a very admirable little work, by an American. It is called 'The Call for Trumps, with some Remarks upon the Echo.'" Mr. Cramp drew a little paper-covered pamphlet from his waistcoat pocket. The General watched its appearance in a state of apparent speechlessness. "It may seem a little officious on my part to be so continually referring to authorities, but the truth is that whist, as a game, has entirely altered during the last few years. I find here, at Pendleton, such a seeming unconsciousness of this fact, that I hope I may be excused if I venture to call attention to the fundamental difference which exists between whist as it is and as it was."

"Will some one ring the bell for me," observed the General, "and order some brandy neat?"

Mr. Cramp went placidly on, apparently not observing the peculiarity of the General's manner.

"Whist, as it is, has attained to the dignity of an exact science. A whist player is able, by a series of prearranged signals, to inform his partner of every card in his hand. After two or three rounds he should know where every card is lying. So completely is every detail arranged, that it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that he should know exactly what card to play under every possible combination of circumstances. In other words, he should be as entirely at his ease as if the cards were lying face upwards on the table."

"Aren't you going to have any more whist?" enquired, in the innocence of his heart, the Admiral of the General.

The General exploded.

"Good Heavens, sir! How the somethinged something should I know? The man's talking to us as though we were an awkward squad."

"Really, General, you mistake me."

Mr. Cramp's manner was mild. The General's manner, as he replied, was anything but mild.

"I would have you not to mistake me, sir! This is the Pendleton Club. We are members of the Pendleton Club. You have done us the honour, while enjoying the Pendleton breezes, to become a visitor at the Pendleton Club. We desire to treat you as our guest. We don't force you to play whist, but for goodness' sake don't try to teach your grandmother if you do."

Mr. Cramp bowed, seemingly in quiet acquiescence. A rather acid smile was on his face. Perhaps he found the General,

if a little vulgar, hard to answer. He returned the pamphlet to his waistcoat pocket. Mr. Bowman dealt the cards. The nine of hearts was turned.

Mr. Cramp and his partner ought to have won the odd, but they didn't. This was owing to the difference between their styles of play. Possibly Mr. Cramp wouldn't understand his partner's method, and it was quite evident that his partner couldn't understand his. In consequence of which slight misunderstanding, although they had the honour, their opponents took three tricks.

"I think, General," observed Mr. Bowman, with malicious intent, "that you ought to have had the odd."

"The odd, sir! We ought to have won the game!"

He looked at his partner as if he had a mind to eat him.

"Have you studied the American leads?"

Mr. Cramp put the question to his partner gently.

"The what, sir?"

"The American leads. I have here——"

Mr. Cramp's hand stole towards the tails of his coat.

"Good gad, sir, leave your books in your pocket!"

Mr. Cramp accepted the rebuke.

"It is a little work I have which deals with the American leads. I don't think you have paid much attention to the question which is now so prominent in the circles of pure whist, the question of the penultimate."

"The what, sir?"

"The penultimate."

"I tell you to what you don't seem to have paid much attention, sir. You don't seem to have paid much attention to the fact that you put your ace upon my king."

"I thought you wished me to."

"Wished you to take my trick?"

"In order that I might give you spades."

"Why the—something—did I want spades?"

"Now that is the question which I put to myself. At the time I could only draw my inferences from your play."

The General took out his bandanna. He wiped his brow.

"Hasn't that brandy of mine come yet?"

During the next hand play progressed smoothly—in a sense—and to a certain point. At that point Mr. Bowman picked up a card from the table.

"General, you have revoked."

The General, who had been playing as though he were sitting on hot bricks, turned a beautiful peony colour.

"Never did such a thing in my life!"

"You have done it now. You played a spade when a heart was led, and now you play a heart."

The thing was undeniable. Every one saw it at once, except the delinquent. He saw it by degrees. Mr. Bowman put up the double.

"That was an unfortunate accident of yours, General." Mr. Cramp said this quite sweetly. "We had the honours, and the trumps, and the cards. We might have made the odd trick, with luck. I have seen a treble scored with a much worse hand. But that, of course, under present circumstances, we can't expect."

The General leaned upon the table. By stretching out his hand he might have caught his partner by the nose.

"Are you playing with me or against me, sir? If you are playing with me, why do you take all my tricks?"

"I own, General, that I find your lead—no pun intended—misleading!"

The General drew his breath.

"I—I don't want to insult you, sir, but I have played whist for fifty years, and I have never before sat down at a table with a man like you."

"So I should imagine—judging from your play."

The General sat back in his chair. He looked wildly round the room. Again he drew the bandanna across his brow.

"Deal, some one! Let's—let's get it over! I—I don't want to make a brute of myself!"

The Admiral dealt. And there was peace for a time. A short time, and then there was a storm. The General brought his fist down upon the table with a crash which appeared to be even audible to the Admiral.

"Why the devil did you put your ace upon my queen?"

Mr. Cramp seemed surprised.

"I don't know if it is the custom at Pendleton to criticise the play while a game is in process."

"I'm not going to sit still and be shot at by my own partner! Why the devil did you put your ace upon my queen?"

"May I explain?" Mr. Cramp turned to Mr. Bowman. That gentleman nodded.

"I thought it was an urgent call."

"What the something do you mean by an urgent call?"

"You put your king upon my knave."

"I was third player!"

Mr. Bowman interposed.

"You were wrong, General."

"Wrong!" The General gasped.

"Wrong! Upon my soul, I never thought I should come to this. Let's get on! After this I suppose it doesn't matter what I do."

Whether it mattered or not, he did it. And it did matter, for the result was that Mr. Bowman had the satisfaction—from his point of view—of putting up another treble off the reel. Mr. Cramp smiled bitterly.

"I think, General, all things considered, that you ought to pay my losses."

The General glared. He clutched the Admiral by the arm.

"Come along, Admiral. Let's get out of this. I—I don't want to misbehave myself in a public room. A room"—the General stood up—"in which I have played whist for over fifteen years, and in which I have never been insulted till to-night."

He tore the Admiral from his seat. He dragged him with him from the room, which was rather hard upon the Admiral, for he had no cause to find fault with the way in which the game had gone.

"Might I offer my friend and myself as substitutes for the players who are gone?—that is, if no other gentleman cares to play."

The speaker was a tall, slight man, with a long, drooping moustache. Mr. Bowman glanced up at him. He was a stranger to him; but, at that season of the year, there are so many strangers in Pendleton that, at the club, one finds almost as many visitors as residents. Mr. Bowman had no reason to be disagreeable—he had won.

"I am willing."

He glanced at Mr. Cramp. Mr. Cramp made a little gesture with his hands.

"I am at anybody's service. All I ask is—whist!"

The stranger and his friend came forward. They fell together in the cut for partners. The stranger, having cut the lowest, prepared to deal. As he dealt he addressed himself to Mr. Cramp.

"Like you, my friend and myself are students of whist as it is; I might almost say of whist as it might be."

Mr. Cramp rubbed his hands softly one against the other; it was a little trick he had.

"Disciples of Cole?"

"In a degree. In our systems of signals we go further than Cole."



"I scarcely see how that can be, unless you have even improved upon the American leads."

"No? Well, I shall be happy to explain to you after the rubber is over."

If the new-comers were not exactly disciples of Cole, they at least appeared to be disciples of the extremely difficult art of getting hold of the cards; and it was charming to see the way in which they handled them. They took trick after trick in the serene style.

"Book already!" murmured Mr. Cramp.

With a little laugh the stranger shut up the pack. The laugh was not echoed on the expressive features of Mr. Cramp, nor on those of his partner. As yet they had not scored a trick. The new-comers went gaily on. They took the odd trick, and all the rest besides! Or, rather, they stopped at five, since it was scarcely necessary to go further. But there was nothing to show that they could not have taken the whole thirteen had they been so inclined. Silence followed this surprising result; that is, so far as the main company was concerned. The stranger remained quite at his ease.

"You see," he said, "that is what I call whist as it is, or perhaps you would call it whist as it might be."

"It ought to be sent to the 'Field,'" murmured Mr. Cramp. He seemed troubled in his mind.

"Whist," pursued the stranger, "in its more recent developments, as I understand the thing, becomes simply a question of signals. The most perfect system of signals results in the most perfect game! My friend and I have arranged between ourselves a system of signalling which, I think I may say, is almost perfect."

"It may be made too perfect," said Mr. Cramp.

"How so? You yourself said that whist has been raised to the dignity of an exact science. You can't be too exact. Let's carry the thing to its logical conclusion."

Mr. Cramp was still. Mr. Bowman smiled a ghastly smile.

"I don't like this kind of whist."

"No?" laughed the stranger. "I am sorry!"

"You look sorry," said Mr. Bowman.

One does not mind not making a trick once in a way, though one would prefer to be playing for love even on that solitary occasion; but when the experience is repeated—and in the following hand—a man has fidgets. That is what happened that

evening at the Pendleton Club. The new-comers again walked off with the whole of the tricks, and Mr. Cramp had fidgets, and so had his partner! As for the stranger, he, if possible, was more at his ease than ever.

"You see," he cried, "to what perfection a system of signals may be carried! How completely knowledge may eliminate chance!"

"I do," said Mr. Bowman. "I see it plainly. I see it much too plainly. Gentlemen, if this is whist as it is, in future I shall turn my attention to some other game."

He rose from his seat. Immediately another person, a dapper little man, with shaven cheeks and big black eyes, had his hand on the back of the vacant chair.

"Gentlemen, with your permission, may I complete the four!"

No one offered an objection. The man sat down. He cut Mr. Cramp as his partner. The two friends were again together. The latest comer had the deal.

"Gentlemen," he observed, as he dealt out the cards, "I too am a student of whist, in its latest phase. This is as it appears to me. That a man is bound to acquire a special and peculiar knowledge, either on his own account, or in concert with other men, and that he is entitled to take every possible advantage of a man who knows less than he. As has been said, whist, in a sense, has become a science. Science, in the sense in which in this connection the word is used, eliminates the element of chance. Now, partner, let us see if we cannot command the fortune of war."

He turned the ace of hearts. He took the first trick with a trump—the deuce. He led the ace of trumps in the second trick, the king in the third, the queen in his fourth. At this point the player on his right laid down his hand.

"All trumps," he murmured.

"All trumps," admitted the dealer. With a charming frankness he faced his hand.

"The deuce!" There was an interval for reflection. Then that player delivered himself again. "You're a conjurer," he said.

"I am. So are you, and your friend."

"Not conjurers; merely amateurs. Dabblers by the way."

"Oh, that explains it. I'm a professional. And of course in whist, in its latest phase, the amateur is done."

He addressed himself to Mr. Cramp.  
 "Take my advice. Throw some of those books of yours upon the fire. If their teachings are to be pushed to their logical conclusion, whist will become a game only fit for—conjurers."

## BRIMSTONE PETE.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER IV.

THERE were thirteen of us left in the timber, including a wounded officer, who presently detailed five men to watch for the Indians, so that the rest should get a spell of sleep. My orders were to proceed to the extreme right, and keep a sharp look-out down the valley; so, when I'd lit my pipe, I started off through the brush. At first it was all cut up with horse tracks, but further on the branches hung heavy with service berries, so that I had to force my way. Presently as I worried along—ugh! I can't bear to think of it—I found an open space of grass by the edge of the wood, and there, right at my feet, a white man's body, burned. I turned away cold with horror, to find my gaze rooted on another body, that of a grizzled old man. As I turned back I heard a low crackling sound, a hiss and rush of fire. I looked. There, right in front of me, was a live man bound to a burning woodpile, struggling in his torment while the flames spread through the heap; and I knew him, lad—my one true friend in all the world, the Californian miner, Brimstone Pete!

I hacked at his ropes with my sword, I loosened the knots with teeth and nails, and desperate slashes at the wood. I dragged him off that bed of fire, wrenched the gag from his mouth, then flung myself down on his breast, and thinking that his fainting fit was death, lay with my ear at his heart, praying as I'd never prayed before. At last, when I felt him stir, I lifted his head to let him see my face and know that he was really saved. His eyes widened and leapt at the sight of me.

"My son!" he cried, "my own son!"

There—there was—a bit of wet ground further on, and out near the very edge of the bush, so that I could keep my eyes peeled for Indians. I half dragged, half carried him to the spot, laid my wet handkerchief on his scorched side, and did all I knew to ease the bruises that had been made all over him by the ropes. Then he asked me how I'd found him. I

told the old man how we'd attacked the Sioux with a hundred and fifty rifles and got thrashed.

"And your supports?" said he.

I told him how Custer depended on us to keep half the Indians busy while he forced the lower ford with his four hundred men.

"And the rear guard?"

"Entrenched with Jackson," said I.

"What, not moving to Custer's support? Johnny, Sitting Bull is running this show with Spotted Tail for his war chief. This day's going to bring the worst kind of disgrace on your uniform, my lad."

Presently he spoke again:

"Say, go over to old man Brown's body and mark how the right hand points to a cranberry bush. March five paces from the hand straight towards that bush; you'll find a cleft leaf wilting in the grass. Run your sabre through it and down as far as it will go, then dig."

I found the leaf, ran in my sword and struck hollow metal. It turned out to be an old tomato can, heavy as so much lead, which I opened, and found to be full of gold.

"Shove it in your haversack," said father; then instantly staggering to his feet, "What's that?"

It was the sound of musketry.

### CHAPTER V.

As father reeled out into the strong sunlight, I thought I'd never seen any figure of a man that was half so grand. His grey hair and black grizzled beard were matted with blood, his body all streaked over with scarlet wounds; but his sunburnt skin had the glow of bronze, while the great muscles on his chest and thighs had a look of gigantic strength. With hands sheltering his eyes he was taking in Jackson's position at the hill. All the weakness seemed to have left him, his eyes were alight with anger.

"Johnny," he called, "give me your shooting irons; I'm going to take those cowards yonder to Custer's help!"

I heard the Lieutenant yelling at us from the bush, but father had started off down the line of Jackson's dead towards the river, and I wasn't going to stay behind. The old man ran like a deer, so that, loaded with my clothes and the gold, it was all I could do to follow. Half-way across the meadow, I came up abreast of him with my second wind, gave him my sword, and remarked that we'd fighting ahead of us. Away off down the valley there

were five dots travelling, and by the time we struck the river they had changed into Indians coming down on us at full gallop. The bullets were playing merrily all round us as father led down among dead men and mired horses into the ford. When we were half-way across a bullet ploughed through my hair.

"Spolt your scalp!" said the old man, laughing back at me. At that moment I fouled my spurs in the tail of a dead horse, tripped, went headlong into a hole, and was anchored to the bottom by the can of gold in my haversack; my senses were going, and I hadn't a kick left before father was able to get at the scruff of my neck. Dad hauled me up like a drowned puppy, wrung me out, got the revolver from my holster, and turned to fight the five Indians as if he were potting glass balls for a wager. Down came the leading brave; a second bullet struck the gun from a man's shoulder; and the young chief had just time to tickle father's ear before his feathers were sent flying, together with most of his skull. The fourth bullet was dodged, so that I got a slight flesh wound, but father's fifth and sixth left only one Indian in condition to run away. I began to understand the tradition that Brimstone Pete was hardly a safe man to fool with.

Of course the boys up on the hill had been enjoying the whole entertainment, so when dad turned to climb up the bank we were met with a ringing cheer. A relief party helped us up the rest of the way, which father needed badly for his strength was gone. He rallied at the lines, shook off the men who were holding him, and climbed up on top of the entrenchment. "Who's in command?" he called. Major Jackson came forward. "Well, my man?" "Your man!" sneered Brimstone Pete. "Boys, Custer is fighting four thousand Sioux at the lower ford. Ain't you going down to help?"

There was no answer, except that a company which had been sent to open communications came straggling back out of the woods leading their wounded men. The whole crowd, burning with shame, was waiting for the order to fall in. Down the valley we could hear the rattle of musketry in the distance, gradually fainter and fainter till it died away. Father was standing with head bent down, and hands clasped, while the whole crowd watched him. "Too late," he muttered, "I am too late!" A moment later I heard a queer groan, and

before I could move he pitched forward, falling heavily on his face.

Scarcely a man moved, but far off we heard a few more scattered shots, then there was silence.

#### CHAPTER VI.

AS soon as the surgeon had got father awakened from his swoon I set to work under his orders, helping to wash and dress the wounds. We put on bandages and straps till he looked like a mummy, wrapped him in a warm quilt, and gave him opiates to ease the pain. The sun was going down in glory, the supper fires looked bright all over the hill, the air just breathing about us. He seemed as though he would like to get some sleep.

"Get me a pipe, sonny," he whispered; "I've not had a smoke for three days."

I borrowed a corncob and a plug of myrtle-navy, glad that at last he'd begun to think of himself; but he put them aside before I could strike a match.

"No, Johnny, there's no time now; I hear them creeping through the bush yonder. Hark! that cheep of squirrels is a signal. Quick, get a trumpet, lad, and sound 'to quarters!'"

Even before I could report the facts a yell rang down the woods, the air was hissing with bullets, the Sioux charging up the hill. I ran back as soon as I could to father, to find that he had actually got up to drag his bed to the trenches.

"Get me a rifle," he said, "and sixty rounds."

It was a magnificent fight, the Indians charging again and again, till sometimes we had to fight them hand to hand. As for father, I guess the Indians thought that there were twenty of him, for he lay cool and comfortable in his bed while he piled up a regular heap of Sioux warriors. They drew off at last, leaving us eighteen bodies to bury, besides forty or fifty wounded to be tended by the hospital sergeants. The rest of us, pretty tired after our three hours' fighting, curled up and went to sleep where we lay.

#### CHAPTER VII.

IT must have been about midnight when father woke me up, wanting me to get him some coffee.

"Thankye, Johnny," said the old man, when I brought him his drink. "Now, I guess you want to be off to sleep again, eh?"

Yes, I did want a night's rest, sure; but when I thought of him lying there all

alone in his pain, I concluded it would be selfish to leave him.

"We'll have a quiet smoke together," said I, "and you can tell me how you came to be in Sitting Bull's Camp."

His eyes brightened.

"Give me your hands," he said. "I want to grip them hard; it eases me."

"Well, I suppose you want to know what's happened since we parted in Bismarck. Wintered in the Black Hills, took on in March as a scout with General Crook. He got thrashed, so I concluded I'd had enough of soldiers. Old man Brown and his son much of the same mind. Specially the kid, who was always cocksure unless he just happened to be right. 'Twas him as suggested prospecting the Big Horn Mountains for gold, which was a good proposition, seeing that the range ain't much visited, and the Sioux were too busy fighting to trouble us.

"Up to June we found nary a colour, whereas the Indians were a continual nuisance, hunting us down for our scalps. Besides that, the kid had a mania for wasting powder, particularly on stray redskins, and every time he fired we'd one round less to carry us out through the Sioux country. Finally powder got so scarce that Brown and me concluded we'd head him quietly off on the home stretch, and it was only when we actually camped to build our raft for the river that the kid caught on. At daybreak I woke up first. The east was like the breast of a wild canary, with one big star coming up out of it to light the sun's way. The mountains, I guess, must have been saying their prayers, with the valleys listening, which made me think of my old woman down in Virginia and how the summer's work was wasted, seeing it had brought me no nearer home. A black thing seemed to be crawling towards our camp; maybe a coyote, I thought, or perhaps an Indian; but anyways, I reached for my gun, covered it, and had nearly pulled the trigger, when suddenly it turned out to be a man. He leapt up with a howl—a little beggar, nearly bare pelt, and wild as a loon, holding out to me a great gold nugget as the price he'd give for his life.

"Of course, we did all we could for him, but it was quite a time before we could boil any coffee, his throat being too dry for food. He wasn't an Indian, neither exactly white, but a jabbering French critter from the Hudson's Bay country, and dying of thirst and starvation. Biscuit

wouldn't stay down his throat, coffee not ready; we just had to sit and watch while his life flickered out of him like a spent candle. He shook back his snaky hair, glared with them great crazy eyes, and pointed to the hills while he jabbered at old man Brown. Even when he could jabber no more, he lay straining his glazing eyes towards them mountains, tapping with his claws on the nugget and pointing at the mouth of a gully. The snow fields were rose-red in the sunrise when he reached out his lean arms towards that gulch, gazed into Brown's kind old face, and fell back dead.

"We could pretty well guess what must have happened; the finding of a big gold placer, a summer's work with the 'rocker,' the game further and further up the slopes at the skirts of the snow, the last charge of powder that had missed, the old flint-lock flung away, then a run for the settlements, with Death like the timber wolves at his heels.

"We buried the poor critter as he lay, with the nugget in his hands, and his arms reached out to the hills. The kid, being fresh from school, remembered the Lord's Prayer, so we'd even have made shift for a service but that he couldn't say the words.

"After that, what with Indians and want of ammunition, Brown and I allowed that we'd no right to risk the kid's life with further prospecting; but the youngster merely remarked that we were a couple of idiots, slung into the saddle, and led for the Frenchman's gulch. We followed.

"The canyon was choked with sand drift, hot as flames; but instead of ending with a mere draw in the foothills it kept growing deeper, till at the twentieth mile, still as near as we could judge on a level, we found hardened mud; a salty, green puddle; then a lake. The canyon had doubled in width, the mountains rose tremendous overhead, while in front of us deep blue water reached away out of sight behind a bend. We camped, and at daybreak, when we moved on to the end of the lake, we found that the desert canyon was all left behind. We were in a beautiful park studded with timber, the whole place bright with flowers, and watered by a sparkling mountain creek.

"You see this water must once have flowed right on down the gulch, but the sand drifting in from the plains had dammed it back, spreading the water out into a lake where it sucked down to flow

underground along bed rock. No wonder this Lost River had never been found before!

"On the lake shore we washed out a pan of 'dirt' and found 'colours'; at the river mouth we panned, and got two bits' worth of fine gold; a little up stream it ran nearly three bits to the pan 'coarse'; and where we camped at about the fifth mile we got fifty dollars a day to the hand. We'd struck the richest diggings in the Rocky Mountains! Man, how we worked! Night and day we dandled the Frenchman's old 'rocker,' heaping up the coarse gold, scarcely taking time to bolt our meals. Kid would knock off first to bake bread and boil coffee, then after supper we'd have just one pipe before turning in. One evening the young fool staggered into camp with a deer on his shoulders which had cost one of our last ten cartridges. Brown and I were on the bar at work, but seeing something in the dusk that might have been one of us, he slung the carcass to a pine-tree, chucked a friendly biscuit by way of greeting, and found that he was fooling with a full-grown grizzly bear. Of course he shrieked out, but before Brown and I sailed in there was a lively 'scrap' in the camp. The kid lay across his broken gun, left arm smashed, clothes in ribbons, and was grubbing around that bear with his sheath knife. We peppered the brute till it fell; but by the time we hauled the carcass away, the kid was unconscious. Old man Brown tore up his last shirt to bandage that precious boy, but I loaded the mules. We'd spent our last shot on the grizzly, and I'd have given our packload of gold for a safe conduct to the nearest white man's house. The kid woke up bright as a cricket, but pulled a long face when he found we must travel that night. He'd seen the poor Frenchman die, he'd lost his own mother in the Minnesota massacres, he knew as well as I did that we was in mortal danger; but in spite of his broken arm and all sorts of death lurking around, he chattered and sang songs the whole of that hard night march, just making us two old fools ashamed that he'd caught us afraid.

"I must cut it short, Johnny, this pain's driving me mad! We found a punt, travelled by night down the Little Bighorn, second evening thought we was out of danger when we came out from under the bushes here by the upper ford, and found ourselves without a shot to fire in the middle of Sitting Bull's camp. Indians saw

us, yelled the war-cry, and fired; but the chief accepted Brown's peace sign, so we surrendered on condition that he should let the kid go free. They carried us over to the clump of timber, roped us down, and by way of keeping promises tortured the kid first. As to our gold, they ground most of it up with grease to use for war-paint, but one buck seemed to know more than the rest, for I saw him cache that tomato can under the cleft leaf. I—I can't tell you the rest. They died game, Johnny—they died game—but you came, my son, to lift me up out of the valley of the shadow. Don't cry, lad, it ain't becoming in a man. It was all for your mother's sake. The gold would have made her a rich woman. You see, I thought perhaps after a while she'd go back on her curse and make friends, as we were once.

"Johnny, that 'ere punt is under the dead tree just below the ford. I want you to go to that fellow you've got in command, tell him you have a boat—don't mind me, the boys will see I don't want for anything—tell him you'll get through Sitting Bull's lines before daybreak, so as to carry word to General Terry. When you come back with the reliefs I'll tell you where to find that gold, and your mother shall know after all.

"Now go, be brave, lad. 'Fore heaven, there's nothing else on earth that can possibly save this command!"

Not a man to be loved by halves, Willie, lying there with his eyes closed. When he looked up again he'd think I was scared if he found me still at his side. I kissed him on the forehead and stole away.

"You've a boat?" said Jackson, when I aroused him. "Then why didn't you say so before? Here, I'll scribble a few words. Now go, my lad, and if you get through alive I'll see that you're not forgotten."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

I TOOK the gold and two revolvers, put on a civilian shirt and overalls, drank a cup of hot coffee, grabbed a handful of biscuit, and left the camp. It was still very dark, but I wasn't long in finding the punt, which was hauled up on a mudbank under the trees. I swam across, shoved off, dropped down the current quick and quiet as a water rat; but I'd little to fear, for the camp was empty along the river bank. Off across the meadow fires were burning, where thousands of Indians were gathered at the scalp dance, or listening

to the vaunting of the chiefs; but not a sentry had been posted to guard the camp. The trees hung overhead still as in a dream; my heart was pumping away like a river steamer; every stir of a leaf made me start. I looked about, thinking some awful thing would spring out at me from the tree roots. There was nothing to fear. Soon I was out in the starlight where a great wide trail seemed to come down to the river, and all around I could see signs of Custer's great fight when he tried to attack the camp. The risk was fearful, but I couldn't go on until I knew his fate. Some of our fellows might be alive in the woods, perhaps wounded men were calling aloud for help. Hiding the scow under a bush, I crept ashore, and followed up the line of the retreat. In one place a whole company of our men lay in rank where they had fallen, the two officers in place, and not a sign that any had shirked their fate. A little further on the trail led up a bank, where on the ridge lay old Keogh and all his troop, just where they, too, had given their lives to cover the retreat. Again a little further on I came to a scene that made me cry. Here had fallen Yates' Company, and in the midst, a broken sword in his hand, his white face lifted to the sky, lay General Custer.

The line reached on, but there was no need to follow. Of four hundred men, the one surviving troop, under Custer's brother, had made a frantic attempt to regain the river. It was so silent. Not a breath—not a cry. Suppose I were late in bringing news to Terry? I ran for life, haunted with sickening fear as I thought of father's danger. The darkness was full of unearthly horror, strange, frightful sounds—soft foot-falls in the turf behind, sniffing, deep breathing, a snarl, then red eyes glaring out of the bush, and the wolves were upon me!

Ahead there were Indians, now robbing the dead and barring my way to the ford. What could I do? Dash into cover and take my chance up a tree? Join the savages in a wolf fight? No, for between my two enemies I might be saved. Grasping my revolvers clubwise, I dashed down upon the Indians with my wolves, struck like a thunderbolt, yelled like the fiend, then, as they broke away, dashed through the midst of them straight to my boat, leaving wolves and savages to settle matters at their own convenience. As I glided like a grey ghost down stream, I heard the rousing of the alarm on the one

side, yelping and death shrieks on the other, then faintly in the rear what seemed like a general panic of the whole Sioux nation.

#### CHAPTER IX.

I'd been pretty badly scared, Willie, but I guess that run through Sitting Bull's camp is the one considerable act of my life for which I never needed to kick myself afterwards. The rest of the trip was plain sailing, so that in due course my despatch from Major Jackson brought up General Terry to the rescue. By that time I hadn't much interest left in the war, the Indians being in full retreat for the British Possessions. What I wanted was to get back to my father as quick as old Terry would let me. Thanks to a month's furlough and the gold dust, I wasn't long before I was on the way to Missouri River, following the trail of the ambulance that was taking down wounded men to hospital.

At first I'd been inclined to think that father's yarn was just a wild freak of delirium; but now I began to remember how I'd seen Spotted Tail's warriors gilded like so many picture frames, I sized up the fact that I'd gotten fifteen silver dollars for every ounce of my gold dust. I felt the pace of my fine black gelding, flicked up the pack horse ahead, and looked myself over in an outfit fine enough for a duke. The story was true, the gold of Lost River was real, I'd only to hold out my hands to grasp wealth unbounded. The old Virginia house was to be a palace, the stony farm a paradise with orchards, gardens, and blooded stock, where father and mother should live their remaining years in luxury, while as for me—well, I'd breed race horses, hunt big game, and perhaps run for Congress.

When I overtook the ambulance at dusk, the canvas-hooded waggons were drawn up in a square, the fires lit, the cooks swinging their kettles, the boys grooming their horses along the picket line. It seemed years since I'd left the regiment as they all came crowding round me to shake hands, wanting to know where I'd stolen the fine horse, the buffalo "shaps," the silver-horned saddle, and white sombrero. I was so happy I could have rolled in the grass and kicked. And now to the old man's side, to hear him praise my fine outfit, to sit smoking cigars while he told me how to find Lost River, to buy my discharge from the army, to work the great gold-field for his and mother's sake! But when I asked which waggon Pete was in there

was a hush, the boys let on that they were busy, then went aside whispering together as they glanced at the furthest waggon, and shook their heads. I rode up to the tailboard, ripped the canvas aside, and looked in. The flickering light of the camp was on his face, his sunken, wasted face, and hair that had all turned white. In his hands he held a pack of cards which one by one he dealt out, looking up at me with the smile of a tired child.

"Three spot," he whispered, "ace, and a queen, but the queen cursed me. Now, it's your play!"

I flung the canvas down, struck deep with the spurs, and raced out headlong across the plains. All night I rode, while the stars reeled across the sky, and the twilight swirled into dawn. The sun came up, the harsh blazing day rolled across the heaven into night. They said I was found lying across the body of the horse—let it pass, Willie, let it pass.

I—I went back—to the army. For his sake I rose step by step till I was riding master, and they gave me a commission. All I cared about was to get away from it all, to go away on pass, and stay at the asylum to nurse him. He would get violent, with the strength of a tiger, but even when he sprang on the guards to strangle them, a word, a touch from me would make him gentle again. We used to play cards, but if he found a queen in the pack, he'd hold it to his heart saying that she'd cursed him, and he loved her always. Sometimes he made me pretend I was his own son.

One day I was in riding school breaking a squad of recruits, when a telegram came urging me to make haste if I wanted to see him alive. I never slept until I reached his bedside, then three days watched by his pillow, longing for just one glance of recognition before he died. It was in the peace of evening when he awoke from a long sleep. I'd been reading, but had fallen into a doze, when his eyes aroused me and I found his gaze fastened lovingly upon my face.

"Johnny," said he, "was I long asleep? Is Jackson relieved? He is? Then thank Heaven! Why, Johnny, boy, how old you've grown these days! Yes, I've been ill, very ill; but never mind, old chap, give

me a week to get strong again. Off my head for a while, eh? Fever, yes, it must have been brain fever. We'll be off in a few days. 'Tain't far to Lost River—easy enough trip with horses, just the third gulch south from Bull Creek. What a rush there'll be when news gets around of the strike! Your mother shall wear diamonds—but you and I—well, we two will sit in the stoop and smoke over old times, eh?

"Awful weak, Johnny, 'sif I'd been in bed for years—kinder think I have any-ways. But the pain's gone. Burns all healed up, eh? Yes, the pain's all gone and I don't care a cuss. Sonny, come, hold my hands, I feel as if I was sinking away. Hold tight, lad, it's as though I were falling—down—down—down—Remember—for her sake. Hold hard, man—as—you love me, for it's the Valley—of the Shadow—of—Death."

Why it's sundown! We'll just have to lay our ghosts, and get down to some rancho before dark. The gold? Well, Willie, you ought to know Lost River by this time, considering that you were born and brought up there. The third gulch south from Bull Creek—easy enough to find that! Our City Hall stands just about where the kid had his fight with the bear. That "dirt" which father and old man Brown were working on was "drift" from the Sitting Bull "ledge." As to the lake, it's gone, drained off to make room for the Giant Concentrator. The river? We turned it loose on the desert to make Sioux county one of the very richest settlements in the United States.

Remember your poor old grandmother? she used to nurse you, Willie, spank you, love you, cry over you until you went to school. They lie, Pete and the dear old mother, side by side, not parted now—for the curse has passed away, and they have found their rest.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER IV. THE BELLS OF SHANDON.

WHERE are there to be found sweeter bells than those whose silvery voices drop into the valley of the Lea?

How many a time and oft have I stood by the low stone wall on Patrick's Hill, and listened to their music!

Below you lies the wide-spreading valley; in the distance green, undulating, beautiful; but immediately round the square-towered old church, all is thick with narrow streets and poverty-stricken little cottages—some mere hovels. An easy-going, happy-hearted race, these denizens of this outlying settlement; the women unkempt, the children very scantily dowered as to clothing, but showing such wonderfully beautiful faces here and there, that you long for the pen of an artist to give them life, and a youth that cannot fade, on canvas. In a summer's evening they swarm round the doors and on the high, narrow side-walks like so many bees, and keep up quite as ceaseless a humming; while, by way of variety, a pink-skinned young pig may now and again be seen taking a bath in the white dust of the road, then springing up with a succession of little shrill squeaks, and rushing about hither and thither pursued by young Ireland on bare feet, uttering equally shrill cries of delight; while the matrons at the doors say admiringly to one another:

"Ah, now, the crathur—but he's a swate little gintleman entoirely, and one day he'll be tinder as a chicken. See how

Micky here smolles at him already now!" and Mick, a very tiny specimen, is held up in his mother's arms, and smiles and crows at the pink pig's antics. An easy-going, lazy sort of folk these Irish, much given to basking in the sun; finding happiness, in a way, even amid poverty, squalor, and overcrowding, that strike the stranger as so appalling; people who would pine and die in one of our model lodging-houses, and infinitely prefer the shelter of a peat-cabin, where you could not see yourself for smoke, to that of the well-ordered and eminently respectable residence in question. So quick in sympathy are these people that your sorrow becomes as their own; the tear in your own eye shines reflected in theirs; yet they have dangerous passions slumbering under this readily stirred nature, and, once conscious of wrong, real or imaginary, know no bounds in the lust of revenge—such are your true Southerners, a loveable, faulty race, whose family ties are a passion, and whose religion is a colossal superstition.

The number of people who were able to find place in one of the small cottages that clustered round the church of Sweet Chimes in Shandon Valley was, in truth, a marvel. The whole place was like a rabbit-warren; ragged urchins running in and out of doors, and squatting on steps or on the curb-stone; veritable children of nature, frank and free, not easily made afraid, gay and sprightly, yet never insolent to the stranger who found himself in their midst.

"Shure, and it's Patsey's own lady!" cried one of these gamins.

"Ah, whilst now, can't ye, Tim, and don't be ather makin' too free, you bold gossoon," said his mother severely; at which the bold gossoon straightway hid his head in her petticoats, squinting sideways at the tall



svelte figure of a young English lady, who, with a basket in her hand, came slowly down the sunlit road. He kicked his heels in an agony of delight and shyness as the said lady stopped and spoke to him, all shrouded as he was. Then he showed a face with no nose to speak of, and the widest of mouths full of tiny, pearl-white teeth.

"Patsey's own lady," he said again, evidently convinced that he had made a social success and anxious to repeat it.

"He's the boldest boy as stands in county Cork, is our Tim," said the mother, fondling the rough unkempt head with one hand while she held the baby over her shoulder with the other. "If he met Our Lady herself coming over the hills, he'd just be ather passin' the time o' day to her. Glory be——"

"Never mind, Tim, you'll make a grand soldier one of these days," said the lady, with a smile so passing sweet it might well have made the sunshine blither still, and behold in Tim a mighty transformation! He was out of his mother's gown in a jiffy, out on the side-walk, a very soldier, though a sorry tatterdemalion. No trussed chicken could have been straighter and stiffer than Tim; elbows well back, bare legs keeping perfect step and time, while the shrill little voice rang out a piping clarion:

"Tan-ta-ra-ra, rub-a-dub-dub-dub . . ."

An admiring audience seemed to rise from the ground; Tim's mother by no means the least delighted of the crew. One little fellow beat upon a sancepan he had purloined, keeping time to Tim's song and march. It was quite a little military parade in its way.

Suddenly Tim stopped short, and looked up into the lady's face.

"That's like the men step up on the hill, but"—with a sigh—"they've no drums to be ather bating, the crathurs!"

The lady turned with a look of surprise to the lad's mother.

"What does he mean?" she said. "Do our men drill up on the hills? I never heard of them doing so."

"What does he mane?" cried the other, much disturbed, and shaking the baby up wildly; "what is he manin', my lady; is it the holy saints themselves could tell the manin' of a little misfortnit villain, same as that? Be off wid ye, Tim, now, or I'll be gettin' ye by the scruff o' the neck, and bringin' the devil's fantigues out o' ye by shakin', so I will."

Tim turned one somersault, then another, then walked a few steps on his hands, then

set himself right end uppermost, and grinned. Evidently some new "devil's fantigues" had got possession of him.

"There'll be a tar-barril shinin' out one o' these nights—och, murther! but it 'ill be the best iver seen."

Tim kept well out of reach of the maternal wrath, and kept edging up towards a certain low door leading into a carpenter's shed, and much affected by the youth of that neighbourhood. Yet from this very quarter came vengeance unlooked for and complete. A sinewy arm—one not, indeed, entirely unsuggestive of simian origin, so lean and hairy did it show in the sunlight, was stretched through the dark opening above, and Tim, squeaking like a rat, was lifted by the seat of his breeches high in air, and so conveyed out of sight. It was a wonder that those patched and fragmentary garments stood the strain; the simian hand must, indeed, have taken a firm grip, and held on with a will.

The lady looked troubled at the prompt disappearance of the "bold gossoon," and had to be reassured by Mrs. Doughty in her politest manner.

"Shure, he'll come to no harm, ma'arm. It's just the dad that's ather wantin' him to dig a bit in the potato-patch, an' that's the blessed truth. He's a swate-natured cratur is Tim; but he has his ways, ma'arm, and it's the dad knows how to humour him." Then, with a sudden change of tone: "It's poor wee Patsey you'll be ather comin' to see to-day, the saints make your bed in your own day o' sickness! Well, he's keepin' fairly. Times you'd be thinkin' he'd just die away wid himself, and then he'll be cheerin' up like the sun from behind a cloud. Shure and certain, it's a crool life he leads, an' 'twould be a mercy the dear saints would take him to be one up above, the crathur!"

"We must do what we can while he's left with us here," said the lady softly.

What a delight in a woman is the cadence of a soft, musical voice!

Even Mrs. Doughty, oppressed by the cares of a family like the sands of the sea-shore in winter, and hampered by Tim and his "devil's fantigues," felt the soothing charm of face and voice as she looked and listened. Doubtless in her honest, narrow soul she thought it a pity that a poor Protestant heretic should be so fair to look upon, so sweet to hearken to. Still, the tender Irish heart in Mrs. Doughty's bosom warmed to the woman who had set

herself the loving task of brightening a little suffering life, and bringing light and healing into the darkness of pain and suffering.

There need be no mystery about the fact that the lady with the basket is the heroine of our story. If any carp at the basket as savouring of the too commonplace, I can but plead the sacredness of many of life's most prosaic sides, and the mighty example of one of the greatest writers that the world has ever known—he whose immortal Charlotte first appears before the reader, "cutting bread and butter."

After that my basket may be pardoned; the more so as it contained comforts for little Patey, the child who was always sick and mostly sorry, and who lived—such living as it was—in Shandon Valley.

Alison Drew was not by any means a garrison beauty. There were many more striking girls to be seen in Cork, that city of fair women. Indeed, she did not strike you at all; she won upon you; stole into your heart until—an almost unnoticed presence at first—she filled it completely. Her fine and noble spirit looked out at you through her quiet steadfast eyes of golden hazel; if they had something of wistfulness in them at times, you were not surprised when you knew her story. Her hair—almost the colour of her eyes—fell in soft tendrils upon her brow; her mouth did not appeal to you as anything particular until she spoke to you. Then you were never tired of watching its sensitive curves, and delicate shades of expression. The grace of her figure was not that of languid lines and affected inertness, but that of a lithe activity; and she had the most perfectly formed head ever set upon a woman's shoulders. That she did not shine out among her fellows as some maidens do might be accounted for by the paleness of her colouring, and a something subdued about her whole personality, that gave her an air as of one who rather shrank from general notice and admiration; but with those she loved this reserve gave place to a complete self-surrender. Self-forgetfulness begets courage, therefore Alison Drew was more capable of daring in a supreme moment than most women, who seldom entirely forget the footlights. A youthful cornet of Dragoon species, who prided himself upon his French, once said there was something "morne" about her, and that her eyes had a misty look when she was not talking;

a peculiarity which, he vowed, gave him the creeps.

There may have been some truth in this theory of his; for Alison was one who ever walked within the shadow of a great sorrow.

Her mother, the only sister of Major Henneker of the One Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment of foot, had made a most unhappy marriage; had at length been deserted, and—as so often happens to the gentlest and the best, why, we poor mortals are little able to explain—sorrow upon sorrow fell on her devoted head, bowing it low, even to the dust. A horrible disease fell upon her already enfeebled frame, and death stared her in the face, rather perhaps should we say watched her with grave and pitying eyes, even as a mother watches her little tortured babe and longs to see it close its eyes in the sleep that is eternal rest. "You have suffered enough—come home!" those shadowy eyes seemed to say.

Yet had earth one fond, sweet tie, and that was—Alison.

The daughter's love for the mother was a passion; and the agony of that moment in which Alison was told that death, in one of its most dreadful forms, was inevitable for the one creature she loved of all the world, left its mark upon her life, even as the jagged wound leaves an ineffaceable scar. Not one detail of the trying care needed by such a case was committed to the hand of a stranger, however skilled.

Day and night—night and day—the two women dreed their bitter weird. What communion of hearts, what spiritual agonies and consolations were theirs, who may say? Alison spoke little either then, or ever, of those months of a terrible ordeal, over whose terrors love did still prevail, and faith shone from above as the sun shines upon deep and troubled waters. The end came; the sweet and patient eyes were closed; the wasted hands crossed, as in unquestioning submission, on the once tortured breast. Then Alison gathered herself together to live her life, even as that dear one would have had her live it. She looked out upon all the world with eyes that sought only how she might help and comfort the weary and the heavy-laden. They, of all the world, appealed to her most, since they had in some sort the essence of the loved and lost. Heaven calls upon us all for these fearful struggles after higher things. We cannot

linger weeping by the grave where we have laid our dearest. Life finds no place for haltings by the way. We must on, with what strength we may, crippled, maimed, never as once we were, yet God's own creatures still, with all His work to do.

Alison gladly accepted the offer of her uncle to make his house her home. She was so far independent as to be a burden to none; but her desolation cried out for home-ties and home-surroundings; and now, after four years, it really seemed quite a ridiculous thing to the Hennekers to try and realise that she had not been always with them.

"Mother," Elsie Henneker would say, "however did we get along before Alison came to be one of us?" and Mrs. Henneker had no solution of the question to offer. There was no small significance in the expression "one of us." Alison was not among them; she was of them. You see the first lesson of sorrow is often bitterness; the second, love. At first we are ready to hate all things, because the desire of our eyes is taken from us; then, tears wash away the hardness; we love all the sad and sorrowful creatures of the world for the sake of the loved and lost. It had been so with Alison. The exquisite perfection of her sympathy with others made an atmosphere as of music around her. She was both wise and witty; and through the grey shadow that still hung over her came soft gleams of light and gentle ripple of laughter.

But there was no laughter in her eyes or on her lips, as she sat by little Patsey. Alison had passed down a narrow court, and through the doorway of a sort of shanty that, as Mrs. Doughty put it, "looked the other way"—that is, stood back to back with the houses fronting the lane. The windows of this lean-to were mostly glazed with rags, but here and there an unbroken pane let in a ray of light that fell lovingly upon the face of the sick child. Patsey's couch was a strange one—an old soap-box filled with shavings, with a board nailed across one end for his head to rest upon.

Never would Alison forget the first time she had seen that wonderfully beautiful face looking up at her with an amazed delight, as though she were some angel visitant.

"What—oh, what is this!" she said, more as if speaking to herself than to those about her.

"That's Patsey, ma'arm'; just himself and nothing else at all at all," said some

one by; but Alison had neither eyes nor ears for any one. She was down on her knees beside the lowly bed; she had lifted a little withered hand, like a bird's claw, in her own; and the tears were welling up as she met the gaze of the great luminous grey eyes, whose fringes were black as night, and in whose depths lay the spell of a marvellous patience and pathetic endurance.

"He's just a blighted bein', a misfortunit crathur entoirly, is Patsey! He's tin years ould come Michaelmas, an' he's just got no body to spake of. Praise be to the holy saints!"

It was quite true. Patsey's head and face were those of a boy of ten years old; his little shrivelled-up body was but an atomy, and as if that were not enough, the tiny limbs were all twisted, and pain oft-times racked the feeble frame days and nights together.

Things were a good deal different with little Patsey Molloy since he had found his "own lady." The daintiest little pillow, stuffed with softest eiderdown, lay beneath his head, instead of an old coat folded crosswise as heretofore. He would pat it softly with his elfin fingers as he lay, and never, never let any one but his mother put a hand upon it.

How his face comes back to me as I write, and the sound of his little piping voice, telling, over and over again, the story of how he was changed by the fairies long ago—long—long—ago—"when he was a baby!" Those ten years of ever-suffering life seemed such a long time, you see, to Patsey. He is no creature of my fancy, this poor, wee boy, in his box-cradle; this boy with the lovely face, golden locks, and poor, mummied—frame. His patience, his endurance, his pretty, gentle ways, all these are part of a story that is true; the story of a little life that has long since passed through the gate of death, into the haven of rest that lies beyond.

Across the foot of Patsey's bed was now found a second board—moveable, so as to be taken away at night time—and thereon did royally disport themselves many sheep, painfully white, amid trees like pine-apples on sticks, vividly green; the whole tended by two shepherds, apparently second-cousins to Shem, Ham, and Japhet, as seen in Noah's ark. The arrival of these toy figures in Coram's Court had been an epoch; Patsey, for the nonce, had found himself a hero; and sometimes had to turn his golden head aside upon the eider-down

pillow to hide a tear that would come, because the joy of it all was almost too much for him to bear. The story of his being a "changeling" was not without its difficulties to Patsey. Mrs. Molloy would tell how she left the "swate, smolling babe" in a wooden cot before the fire of peat, and how when she came in again, Danny, the old dog, had "ivery hair on his body standing straight on end, an' his teeth grinnin' same as an ould skull, and the cat—bad cess to it—had a back arched up like the bridge across the strame at Molloy's uncle's on the mother's side, which is well known to be like a hog's back for sharpness, an' then we knew 'twas a fairy-craythur had bin an' changed the child, an' from that day Patsey shrivelled up to an atomy. Heaven be his bed one day, praise be to God, who is no respecter of persons at all at all!" Patsey would listen to this marvellous tale with his great, bright eyes fixed upon the mother's face. Then the question of his own identity would rise up and confront him.

"Where did I get to the time I was changed about?" Then, with a bewildered look and a little pucker of the delicate brow: "Wheriver did I get to?"

"Shure, an' it's your own mother's son you are," would Mrs. Molloy break out in a frenzy; "her own illigant Patsey, an' no other; not if the praste himsel' swore differant, avick; and it's just the loight of her loife ye are, me darlint, and she'd be but a poor craythur entoiirely, widout ye to smolle at her when she comes in from the mass where she's bin prayin' for ye and burnin' a candle as long as me arm—the saints be good to us this day! And isn't it the house widout ye that would be like a cage wid the singin' burred flown and gone? Arrah, now, but there's the truth for ye, me darlint."

On the day when first we have seen Alison Drew wending her way to the little houses in Shandon Valley, her thoughts take saddened form as she turns her steps homewards.

"Does no one see," she thinks, "that the face of the sick boy is growing smaller, the luminous eyes larger and brighter, day by day? Can no one see that the 'singin' burred' is about to take wing and fly—that the hand of death is about to open the cage door and set the little captive free?"

At the turn of the road, above Patrick's Hill, a sunbeam awaited Alison.

It was Elsie, Major Henneker's young daughter, bright-haired, bright-eyed, with

a smile that dazzled the British subaltern, no matter to what branch of the service he belonged, and a love of mischief peculiarly her own.

"Naughty!" she cried, holding up a rallying finger. "I was watching for you. Do hurry up. Mrs. Musters is trying to play the harmonium; she is getting ever so red in the face, and the thing is wheezing horribly; and oh, Alison, the Colour-Sergeant has brought us such a lovely new chant!"

Then the two girls turned into the small and shabby building that went by the name of the Garrison Chapel.

### THE KING'S DOUBLE.

THE likeness was striking, unmistakable. There, enthroned on a lofty seat above the President of the High Court of Justice, clad in his azure robe embroidered with the arms of France, sat Henry the Second, but just succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Francis; and now in person opening the Courts after the vacation consequent on the change of sovereign. Here, modestly stationed at the back of the hall, amid a mixed mob of the lower ranks of the followers of the law, bearing as only decoration his tippet of Doctor of Laws, stood Raoul Spifame, Seigneur Des Granges, advocate, and landless lord in a time when wars had struck ruin to many a lofty house of France.

The King, bored by the tedious Latin address of the Chancellor, allowed his eyes to wander over the assembled throng, until they rested on this strange figure opposite to him, his pale countenance lighted up by a stray sunbeam. The King's gaze remained so long fixed on him that all eyes were turned in the same direction, and all noted with astonishment the extraordinary resemblance the young advocate bore to the monarch. It seemed to the King as if he looked on his own portrait, but with his regal vestments transformed to sombre black; and the superatition of the time that shortly before dying one saw his own image appear in mourning garb, made him uneasy and pensive during the rest of the sitting.

On retiring, he informed himself regarding the bearer of this remarkable similarity, and was reassured on learning the name, position, and origin of Raoul Spifame, and the other activities of his position soon effaced the unpleasant impression.

But it was otherwise with Spifame himself. This was a fatal day for him. The pleasantries of his companions at the bar, who called him thenceforth nothing but "Sire," or "Your Majesty," and prolonged and varied this amusement in all sorts of ways, may have upset an already ill-balanced mind. Anyway from this day his incipient madness developed in a definite direction, leaving him sane enough on all other points.

His first strange act was to address a remonstrance to the President regarding some judgement, in his opinion wrongly given. For this he was fined, and suspended from his legal functions for a time. Afterwards he dared, in his pleadings, to attack the laws of the kingdom, and the most respected judicial opinions, often straying from his subject to utter very bold remarks on the Government, not always respecting the Royal authority itself.

This was pushed so far, that the superior magistrates thought they were exercising indulgence in only entirely forbidding the exercise of his profession. Then he frequented the precincts of the Courts, where he used to detain the passers-by and submit to them his ideas of reform and complaints against the judges. Finally his relatives were constrained to demand his civil interdiction, which occasioned his re-appearance before the public tribunal.

The result was a grave revolution in his entire nature. Cited before the tribunal as a certain visionary named Raoul Spifame, the Spifame who left the audience was really mad.

As advocate he was permitted to harangue the judges, and had prepared an oration in which he cited from the classics various examples of men falsely accused by their children, but this was never delivered. As he passed through the vestibule of the chamber of procedure, he heard a hundred voices murmur: "It is the King!" "Here is the King!" "Place for the King!" This gave his tottering intelligence a shock like that which breaks a fragile spring. Reason fled, and, mad enough now, he entered the hall, cap on head, and seated himself with Royal dignity. He addressed the councillors as "our right trusty and well-beloved," and honoured the procureur, Noël Brûlot, with a gracious salutation. Looking around among the audience he regretted that he did not see Spifame, and asked after his health, referring to himself in the third person as "Our friend Raoul Spifame, of whom we

wish to speak." The case was soon decided, and the poor man was recommended to the care of the physicians and removed, well guarded, to a madhouse, distributing as he passed out many salutations to his "Good people of Paris!"

This judgement was noised at Court, and the King desired to have the discourses of Raoul repeated to him. When told that the improvised King had well imitated the Royal majesty, he only remarked: "So much the better that he does not dishonour his likeness, who has the honour to be made in our image." He ordered the poor fool to be well treated, but showed no desire to see him again.

During the first period of seclusion Spifame's aberration was intermittent. By day his own sad identity was present to him; he recognised himself; but by night his real existence vanished in extraordinary dreams, in which he played a different part. Every night he was Henry the Second; sat in the Louvre; reviewed armies; held councils; presided at splendid banquets. Sometimes he recollected the advocate of the Palais, the Seigneur Des Granges, for whom he felt a warm affection; and dawn never came without his having bestowed on him some brilliant testimony of friendship and esteem—the Cap of the President, a seal of state, or the collar of some Order. To Spifame these dreams were his real life, and his prison a dream. Often at even he would pensively remark: "We have slept badly to-night. Oh, these troublesome dreams!"

One strange scene was reported to the chief doctor by the warder. This man had received Royal largesses, paid out of the little money arising from the sequestered goods of the patient, and had ornamented the cell of Spifame with a steel mirror, glass being forbidden lest the patients should break it and injure themselves. Spifame at first paid little attention to it, but as evening came on, and he walked in his chamber in his usual melancholy way, he suddenly stopped on seeing the reflection of his face. Forced, being still awake, to believe in his real individuality, he believed he saw the King, who had come to pay him a visit. Accordingly he saluted His Majesty with a profound bow. On rising, he saw the image of the supposed Prince also assuming an erect position, which was evidence that the King had returned the salutation. This was a great joy, and an infinite honour. He seized the opportunity, and plunged into

terrible incriminations against the traitors who had put him into this situation, and doubtless aspersed him with His Majesty. The poor gentleman even wept in protesting his innocence, and demanding an opportunity to confound his enemies, and the Prince appeared profoundly touched, for a tear sparkled on his cheek. Spifame's features at this were illumined with joy, while the King smiled with an affable air, and held out his hand. Spifame advanced his hand and struck the mirror, which fell to the ground with a terrific crash, bringing the warders at once.

That night in a dream he ordered freedom to be at once restored to Spifame. For him there was created the high office of "Keeper of the Royal Seal," and he was charged with the restoration of the affairs of the kingdom, which were at the moment in jeopardy. Some days of fever succeeded the shock of these grave events, and Spifame's condition became so serious that the physicians ordered him to be removed to another place, where the company of other patients might turn him occasionally from his habitual meditations, and it was decided at the same time to give him a special companion.

If, however, there was any thought of really improving his condition, a grievous mistake was made. In fact it seemed to be more as a joke that they selected just such another as Raoul himself—mad on one point, otherwise sane enough, and not without parts. This was Claude Vignet, self-styled the Royal Poet, possessed with a mania for tearing up everything not written by himself, believing all other writings to be the rival productions of the inferior poets of the time, who had robbed him of the King's favour.

When the poet was introduced into Spifame's chamber he appeared confounded, and in utter astonishment took a step forward, and, falling on his knees, cried out: "His Majesty!"

"Rise, my friend," said Spifame. "Who are you?"

"Do you not recognise the humblest of your subjects, and the greatest of your poets, O great King? I am Claudius Vignet, the illustrious author of the 'Sonnet to Star-studded Space.' Sire, avenge me on a traitor, the despoiler of my honour, Melin de Saint-Gelais."

"What! my favourite poet—the keeper of my library!"

"He has robbed me, sire; he has stolen my sonnet, he has misused your goodness."

"Is he really a plagiarist? Then I shall give his post to my brave Spifame, at present travelling in the interests of the kingdom."

"Rather give it to me, and I shall spread your renown from east to west over all the earth."

"You shall have a pension of a thousand crowns, and my old doublet, as yours is very ragged."

"Sire, I perceive my sonnets and epistles have been until now withheld from your knowledge, though all addressed to you. Thus 'tis done in courts—

"That hateful place of shady knaves."

"Claudius Vignet, you leave me no more; you shall be my minister, and you shall put in verse my decrees and my ordinances, and thus shall they be immortalised! And now 'tis the hour when our friend Diana visits us, and 'tis fitting we be left alone."

And Spifame, having thus dismissed the poet, took his usual after-dinner nap.

After a very few days the two were inseparable. For the one the poet was the praise which resounds in all forms round kings, and confirms the idea of their superiority. For the other this incredible resemblance was the certitude of the presence of the King himself. The two were no longer in a prison, but a palace; their rags were splendid garments; their ordinary repasts were banquets, where amid melodious music there arose the harmonious incense of verse.

Spifame after his reveries was communicative, and Vignet was especially enthusiastic after he had dined. The pair held many strange conversations, the pseudo-monarch one day developing plans for the war against Spain; and another day giving vent to his solicitude regarding the organisation and embellishment of the chief town of his kingdom, of which the innumerable roofs spread afar beneath the prisoners' windows.

Vignet, in his lucid moments, heard clearly the noise of iron bars and the clanking of chains. This led him to think that they shut up His Majesty occasionally, and he communicated this observation to Spifame, who answered mysteriously that his Ministers were playing a great game, and that he guessed all their plots. But on the return of his Chancellor, Raoul Spifame, things would change, and with his aid and that of Claude Vignet, his only friends, the King of France would

issue from his bondage, and renew the golden age sung by the poets.

But as deliverance was delayed, Spifame sought to advise the people of the captivity in which their King was held by perfidious councillors, and compiled a proclamation ordering his subjects to rise in his favour. At the same time he issued several edicts and very severe ordinances, in the primitive fashion of throwing them out of the window between the bars, rolled up and weighted with small stones. Unfortunately some fell on the roof of a pig-stye, others were lost in the wet grass of a meadow. One or two perched like birds in the foliage of a lime-tree, where they too were as good as lost.

Seeing the little effect of these public manifestoes, Claude Vignet imagined that their inefficiency was to be ascribed to the fact that they were only in manuscript, and set about founding a Royal printing establishment, in which to reproduce the King's edicts, as well as his own odes. With the little means at his disposal his attempts were elementary, but with infinite pains he contrived to fashion twenty-five wooden letters, with which he laboriously imprinted, letter by letter, the ordinances, which were designedly made very brief. The ink was compounded from the oil and smoke of his lamp.

Thenceforward the edicts were multiplied in a much more satisfactory manner, the boldness of print, rude as it was, giving them an impress of authority which was lacking in mere writing. Some of these documents which were preserved, and have been reprinted several times in later days, are very curious, notably that which declares that King Henry the Second, in Council, having heard the pitiful complaints of his good subjects against the perfidies and injustices of Paul and Jean Spifame, brothers of the faithful subject of that name, condemned them to be tortured, flayed, and boiled, and the ungrateful daughter of Raoul Spifame to be publicly whipped and pilloried, and thereafter shut up in a nunnery. In another proclamation, —the decree by which the judges had deprived him of free access to the Courts of Justice still ranking in his breast—it is in the King's name ordered that all ushers, guards, and persons of any judicial degree whatsoever allow his trusty friend, Raoul Spifame, free entrance into the said Courts, and all advocates, pleaders, and other rabble, are forbidden to hinder his eloquence and the unrivalled delights of his

familiar conversation touching all matters, political or otherwise, on which he may please to give his opinions. Other edicts, always issued in name of the King, treat of justice, finance, war, and specially of the internal police of Paris.

But notwithstanding all these wind-strewn seeds of insurrection cast out for the awakening of the faithful of the good city of Paris, these busy conspirators were astonished at seeing no popular commotion beginning. Spifame attributed this want of success to the watchfulness of the Ministers, and Vignet accounted for it by the persistent hatred of Mellin and Du Bellay. The printing-press was stopped for a time. More serious measures were contemplated. A "coup d'état" was meditated. Never having dreamed of escaping merely to be free, they planned an escape to open the eyes of the Parisians.

Having once set to work, they soon unfixed the bars of their window, without interruption from their jailers, who thought them patient and content with their lot. The press was again set in motion. Four-lined lampoons and incendiary proclamations were struck off in copious numbers, and towards midnight they managed to make their way to freedom, not without some bruises in getting over the walls.

By three in the morning they gained the friendly shelter of a little wood, which might have hid them long enough, but they had no thought of taking minute precautions. It was only necessary to be free for them to be recognised—the one by his subjects, the other by his admirers.

However, they had to await the opening of the city gates at five o'clock. Already the way was cumbered with peasants carrying their produce to the markets. Spifame prudently determined not to discover himself until he reached the heart of the city, and partly covered his face with a corner of his mantle, recommending, at the same time, his companion to veil the brilliancy of his Apollonian countenance by drawing down his grey beaver. As they approached the city Raoul confided to his favourite that he could not have undertaken such a troublesome expedition, and assumed such a shameful incognito, if there had not been for him greater interests at stake than even liberty and power. The unfortunate man was jealous! —jealous of the Duchess of Valentinois, Diana of Poitiers, his beautiful mistress, whom he had not seen for some days, and who might have passed through a thousand

adventures in the absence of her Royal chevalier!

Thus conversing they had already entered the populous streets on the right bank of the river, and soon found themselves in a wide open space near the Church of the Innocents, already thronged with people, it being a market-day.

Noting the brisk movement among the people, which he took for signs of agitation, Spifame could not conceal his satisfaction.

"Friend," said he to the poet, "see how those citizens are already moved, how angry are their faces. There are already in the air the germs of discontent and sedition. See that man armed with a halberd! Oh! unhappy are those who foster civil war! Yet I shall be able to command my arquebusers to manage all these men, innocent to-day because they second my projects, and guilty to-morrow because they haply may condemn my authority."

"Mobile vulgus!" pertinently answered Claude Vignet.

As he scanned the assembled people, Spifame suddenly showed such signs of anger and surprise that Vignet asked him the cause.

"Look!" said Spifame angrily. "Do you not see that pillory, retained in spite of my ordinances? Sir, the pillory is abolished, and I shall make a clean sweep of the city officials. That is, I have a good mind to do so, but it belongs to our people of Paris to do justice in this matter."

"Sire," said the poet, "will not the people be still more enraged to learn that Du Bellay's verses engraved on this fountain contain in a single line two false quantities?"

"Ho!" cries Spifame, not heeding this observation; "ho! good people of Paris! Come hither and listen!"

"Hear the King, who himself desires to speak with you!" adds Vignet, at the pitch of his voice.

Both had mounted on a high stone which supported an iron cross, Spifame standing erect, with Vignet seated at his feet. The people eagerly pressed round, thinking at first that it was some quack about to vend his ointments. But Raoul Spifame suddenly pulled off his hat, and, throwing back his mantle, displayed a sparkling collar of orders—mere tinsel and glass—which he had been allowed to wear in his confinement to flatter his mania. As the bright morning sun illuminated his face it was impossible not to recognise the true image of King Henry the Second, who was frequently seen riding through the city.

"Yes," cries Claude Vignet to the astonished mob, "it is indeed the King whom you have in your midst, and also his Minister and favourite, the illustrious poet Claudius Vignetus, whose works you all know by heart."

"Good people of Paris," continues Spifame, "hear the blackest perfidy! Our Ministers are traitors, our magistrates are felons, who have held in cruel captivity your well-beloved King, as was done to the first kings of his race, and to Charles the Sixth, his illustrious grandsire."

At these words there was a murmur of surprise in the crowd. The news spread. "The King! The King!" resounded on all sides. The strange revelation set tongues a-wagging, and the uncertainty increased when Vignet pulled out the roll of edicts and decrees, and distributed them, not forgetting to mix therewith some copies of his own poetical productions.

"See," said the King, "these are the edicts we have issued for the good of our people, which have neither been published nor obeyed."

"These are," added Vignet, "the divine poems which have been traitorously pilfered and debased by Pierre de Ronsard and Mellin de Saint-Gelais."

"In the King's name the people are tyrannised over——"

"'Sophonisba' and the 'Franciade' are printed with the Royal privilege which the King has not signed——"

"Listen to the ordinance which abolishes the salt-tax, and this other which annihilates feudalism——"

But their words were no longer listened to. The papers they had scattered were eagerly read, and, passed from hand to hand, excited wonderful sympathy. There were loud exclamations of wonder and rage, and at length the excitement rose to such a pitch that they elevated the Prince and his poet on a sort of improvised triumphal chair, and spoke of carrying them to the Hôtel de Ville, until they should be strong enough to attack the Louvre.

The popular movement might have become serious if this had not happened to be the day when the Dauphin's bride, Mary of Scotland, made her triumphal entry into Paris by the Porte Saint Denis. Thus, while Raoul Spifame was being carried shoulder-high in the market-square, the true King was passing on horseback along the moat of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, at no great distance. Hearing the noise of some tumult, several officers rode forward, and presently re-



turning, reported that a new King was being proclaimed on the streets.

"Let's go meet him," said King Henry, "and by the faith of a gentleman, if he is worth it, we'll offer him single combat!"

But as the halberdiers of the procession emerged from the narrow streets leading to the square, the mob stopped its advance, and presently melted away by the side alleys, as the morning mists disappear before the rising sun. The spectacle was imposing enough as the King's body-guard drew up in the square, and foot and horse lined the neighbouring streets, while on the King's breast sparkled the diamonds of all the sovereign Orders of Europe. Many cried "A miracle!" for there, in full view, were two Kings of France, with features exactly alike, both pale, both proud in mien, both garbed alike to outward appearance, only the "good King" did not sparkle quite so brilliantly as the other.

At the first movement of the soldiers towards the mob, the flight was general. Spifame and Vignet alone stood their ground, perched on the odd scaffolding on which they had been placed, and offered no resistance when they were seized and hurried before the King.

The impression made on the poor madman by the presence of the King was so strong that he fell into one of his most furious fevers, confounding as before his dual existence as Henry and Spifame, which he could not disentangle.

The King, informed of the whole story, took pity on the unfortunate gentleman, and ordered him to be taken first of all to the Louvre, where he was carefully tended, and where he for a time excited the curiosity of the Court, and, sooth to say, served sometimes to furnish amusement to the courtiers. His Majesty, having noted how, with all his strange madness, he was gentle and respectful towards himself, forbade his being again removed to the madhouse, where the perfect image of the King must sometimes be exposed to the rudeness and ridicule of visitors and menials, and ordered him to be kept in one of his castles, and cared for by special servants, who were instructed to treat him as a real Royal personage, and to call him "Sire," and "Majesty." Claude Vignet was assigned to him as a companion as before, and his poems, as well as the new ordinances which Spifame continued to compose in his retreat, were printed and preserved by the King's desire.

A complete collection of the decrees and

edicts of this pseudo-monarch was printed in the following reign under the title, "Dicæarchiæ Henrici regis progymnasmata," of which one or two copies survive. It is not the least remarkable part of this strange story that the reforms indicated by Raoul Spifame in these idle productions have for the most part been actually carried out since his time. Though his madness dominated his life, his intellect was unaffected, and in social and political knowledge and forethought he was far in advance of his age.

## STOCKHOLM.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

It was a sufficiently keen January morning when a porter of the Angletterre Hotel of Copenhagen shouldered my portmanteau, and suggested that if I had finished my breakfast we ought to be moving towards the packet for Malmö.

"Do you think," I asked, "that the boat will get across?"

But the porter could say nothing positive on this score. According to the newspaper the ice-boat had made the journey the previous day, and though the frost had been very severe in the night, its captain might be trusted again to attempt the feat. Each journey with passengers and mails was worth a good deal to him, not only in reputation—the Sound being fast frozen everywhere save at Elsinore—but in money. Still, there was always the chance that the flocs might prove insurmountable in mid-channel. The prospect was not delightful, but it seemed worth facing. There is nothing so picturesque as a predicament. A modicum of danger often adds to the interest as well as the picturesqueness of a predicament.

And so we set off through Copenhagen's rigid streets to the scarcely less rigid harbour. Only one steamer here showed signs of activity. This was our excellent ice-boat. The captains of other vessels stood about with their hands in their pockets, watching the mails and passengers going aboard the "Bryderer," and, doubtless, wishing they too could get free. My porter saluted and left me.

"Oh," said one gentleman to another on deck, "I am not going over on business. It is something to see, a voyage of this kind. Only once in a number of years do we get such weather as this. I shall return with the 'Bryderer' this afternoon—if she can return."

Then, with an effort, the boat's powerful engines got to work, and we slowly moved through the ice, past the myriad of craft that had resigned themselves to their situation.

It was fine to see—this Northern capital, thus fast caught in ice and snow. Sailors were walking about between the different vessels, stumbling over the rough floes; gulls and countless sparrows strutted at their feet, looking keenly for scraps of garbage soft enough to be digested, and scarcely flapping their wings to get out of the way of the other bipeds; steam whistles were calling here, there, and everywhere, but the steamers themselves were all motionless except the "Bryderer."

A haze of smoke lay over Copenhagen's buildings. The Northern winter's night had not quite gone; a star or two might still be seen overhead. But ere we had moved a mile there was a lurid line in the eastern heavens, and then the sun stole upwards. Our passage was circuitous. The course the "Bryderer" had kept open was extremely serpentine, and there was but just room for the vessel. Even as it was, the frost of the night had in places welded anew the floes disturbed by yesterday's passages, so that the engines had to strain to drive us through them. Fishermen and others stood on either side of the steaming channel, within almost arm's length of our hull, and wished us luck. At one moment we faced Sweden; and yet again we seemed to be returning point-blank towards Copenhagen, whose spires and towers began to look romantic as the cold sun caught their weathercocks and made them gleam faintly through the brooding vapour.

Once in mid-Sound the cold was intense. Even with sealskin over ears and with coat-collar drawn to the nose it was hard to confront the north wind. Those of us who stayed on deck enjoying the spectacle carried ice on our faces. But it was worth putting up with this moderate inconvenience for the sake of the colours the rising sun cast upon the frozen Sound. The water where we churned it amid the floes was emerald green, while the edges of the floes we upturned were turquoise blue. The heavens were saffron-tinted, save where the sun crimsoned them brightly. North and south all was ice, thickly carpeted with snow, which took a pallid violet tinge under the increasing daylight.

So the time passed. Ten o'clock found us within sight of Sweden, and in due

time Malmö was reached. The harbour here was crowded with men robbed of their occupation by the frost. Our arrival was the one event of the day. The departure of the "Bryderer" later was an affair of secondary importance.

Malmö impresses the visitor. Its buildings are large and well designed. It carries the unmistakeable mark of a commercial town of eminence. In its spacious market-place a number of red-faced countrywomen were sitting at their little booths, apparently indifferent to the cold. Less interesting goods for sale could, however, have hardly been beheld. Some sickly vegetables, bits of stiff meat, stiff poultry, and a variety of odds and ends of wearing apparel: there was little else on sale.

I was more attracted by the faces of the people. It requires an acquaintance with the three parts of Scandinavia to distinguish the Norwegian, Danish, or Swedish physiognomy. Even then, of course, one may easily come to a wrong conclusion. But to my mind, the difference between the people of Malmö and the Danes of Copenhagen was well marked. The difference is stronger in manners than in features. There is much merit in the national summary of the French writer who said: "The Swedes are the gentlemen of Scandinavia, the Danes the tradespeople, and the Norwegians the peasants." The average Dane is tolerably polite; but I hope I do his countrymen no wrong in thinking that his courtesy is that of the shopman with something to sell. The Swede of the towns—and especially of Stockholm—is more radically polite. It is engrained in him. Nor does it seem a mere veneer in him, as it is so often with the Frenchman. As for the Norwegian, he claims to be no more and no less than an honest man, and—as he tells you with a vast deal of boorish pride—therefore in no need to smirk and use fine phrases.

There is an excellent hotel at Malmö, that of Kramer. Here I spent a warm hour or two enjoying the society of two or three courteous gentlemen with Dundreary whiskers, who, like myself, were tarrying for the express to the capital. Cafés are as much the vogue in Sweden as in France, nearly; and very agreeable some of the Swedish cafés are. Kramer's is a fair example of them. It is no small thing in these cold lands to be able to retire to a snug, softly-cushioned room and coffee as good as it need be.

The express left Malmö at three o'clock, and took me with it. The distance to Stockholm is about four hundred miles, and at seven o'clock the next morning we were set adrift in the Stockholm streets. As travelling, it was no high speed. But the deficiency in pace was atoned for by the comfort of the train. It carries sleeping cars for two classes, and they are both admirable, with corridors, lavatories, and so forth. Once aboard, travellers slip off their galoshes and boots, get into slippers—and dressing-gowns if they please—and live as if they were at home. The temperature is, if anything, too warm. And there are fine broad window-panes for the prospects.

Lund, with its double-spired cathedral, was passed. We had seen the spires from the Sound, but it was good to see them again. A student or two from the University joined us. Then we plunged on in the fading daylight. Windmills, birch-trees, boulders, and snow—these now were the characteristic features of the land till the stars came out.

At Nässjö there was a break for supper. The railway meals in Sweden are excellent, and for a crown and a half (one shilling and eightpence) you sup well. Afterwards you return to the train to find the beds made.

For my part, I did not trouble my bed until late. I preferred to smoke a meditative cigar in the corridor, watching the trunks of the birch-trees scamper by outside. The moon was up, and the forests looked romantic enough in the moonlight. Forests, lakes—white all over—and very, very rare hamlets among the rocks and icicles—such Sweden seemed to me until I began to yawn. Then I stretched myself on my upper berth, and sweltered in the heat till I slept. When I awoke it was to hear that Stockholm was at hand, and to be offered a morsel of Malmö chocolate by my travelling companion. He and I had not been able to exchange many words en route; but at parting I made out his mannerly phrase of "Thanks for your good society." It was a nice expression, even though the civility may not have been deserved. From that time forward I used the words freely in the land. They appreciate that sort of thing in Sweden.

First impressions of famous places are nearly always worth contrasting with more mature impressions of the same places. As I left the great railway station and put myself into the care of a sledgeman, I was

struck by the stillness of Stockholm and the height of the houses in the broad Vasa Street upon which the station abuts. To be sure, it was early. Yet people and vehicles were about. But they made no sound. The snow, crushed into a pale brown dust by traffic, served the purpose of the tan we lay down for our invalids. The tinkle of my sledge-bells was musical and loud in the reigning quietude, and overhead the stars shone brightly.

This impression, however, was soon ousted by the later turmoil of tram-cars and all the other incidents of life in a great city. And now I think of Stockholm as a gay and lively place, by no means suited for a dreamer of tranquil, idyllic dreams. Even in the night, as we jingled along, I could see the dark ropes of wire overhead which seemed to chain the house-tops together. These were miles upon miles of telephone—fair proof of the energy of the Swedes at conversation as well as business enterprise. I was yet to make acquaintance with the Swedish domestic interior, and learn what a considerable part the invention plays in it. Very shortly it is expected that the telephonic service in the land will be so complete, that from Malmö in the south to Haparanda in the far north—well within the Arctic Circle—a distance of about a thousand miles, you will be able to converse almost as easily as from one house to another house over the way.

Stockholm is not a very old city. It is almost a relief to know that it has no Roman remains. Archæologically, indeed, Scandinavia is not enthralling. The Vikings were too fond of the open air to build for posterity. They have left constitutions to their descendants, not brick and stone ruins; and very fine are the physical presentments of some of these Swedes of Stockholm. Both men and women abound who are superb specimens of their kind: tall, broad, of fearless deportment, fine movement, rich complexions, and eyes blue as the sky of Naples or elsewhere. The man who comes to Sweden for antiquities must spend his days in the museums or among the Sagas, ancient and modern, which tell of the life led by the mediæval Swedes of mark.

The name Stockholm means "stick island." An explanation of this gives us a small leaf of history. There was, in old time, a certain large and wealthy town called Bieurkoo, on the northern arm of Lake

Malar, between Stockholm and Upsala. Bleurkoo's population grew too fast to satisfy the heads of the town, who forthwith consulted their idols on the subject. The wise idols, by the mouths of the priests, told the lords of Bleurkoo to try emigration. The gentlemen thereupon "took a great block of wood, to which they fastened some gold, and set the block swimming in the water, and agreed that there they would build the new town where their gods should cause the block to stay." The gods of old Sweden could in no way have shown better judgement than by arresting the lump of wood upon the shore of the island which is now the centre of modern Stockholm.

The above is the tale of Stockholm's origin told to our Ambassador Whitlocke, in 1654, when, between his interviews of state with Queen Christina, he dabbled gently in the history of the people to whom Cromwell had sent him so much against his will.

It is a pretty picture out of the dark ages. What, we wonder, would these tawny-haired ancients think if they could see Stockholm as it now is, with its many-storeyed houses rising on hills one above the other, its noble bridges spanning the lake here and there, its countless steamers, its theatres and music-halls, and its immense white Royal Palace filling an entire angle of the island against which their gold-mounted lump of pine-wood chose to rest.

I made my debut in Stockholm with a warm bath, and then, having taken coffee, went forth into the streets.

This was the cold North with a vengeance. Ice and snow had had it all their own way for two or three months, and were likely to continue their sway for as long again. Malar was frozen and deep in snow. Trees had been set in the ice across the lake to mark the winter roads from one side of the lake to the other. Only under the fine central bridge of the city was the water unfrozen. Here the cold current ran strong towards the Baltic—for a score or two of yards.

On an abutment of the bridge is a pleasure garden, small but chaste, adapted for music, the sweet witchery of love-talk, ices, punch, and other light refreshments. But the gardener's vocation was, of course, suspended. Snow covered the garden walks, and the black slips of trees stood from the white covering without suggestion of life, much less of summer levity. A number of iron chairs filled a corner of the

garden, and doleful sparrows had perched on them with the air of birds who had long ago given up hope of ever again beholding a nice soft worm. In July the café of the Ström parterre is charming; but in January, with the ice and snow in front, and the dark hurrying water by its side, it breeds thoughts of utter melancholy and sudden death.

Still, it is just this life of extreme contrasts that makes Stockholm so dear to the Stockholmers. In summer they can loaf, and idle, and sit in the sun like the most accomplished of Frenchmen. In winter they take to their furs, telephones, and music-halls, and skate every day. And, winter or summer, they maintain that Stockholm, the beautiful and gay, is by far the best place in the world to live in.

It is not really that; but for a tolerably robust person it may claim to be one of the best.

Money seems to go a long way here. The necessaries of life are cheap. This is especially so in winter, when there is little fear of provisions spoiling. But the Stockholmers are not content with the mere necessaries of life. They spend a great many crowns annually apiece on punch in music-halls, and the like palatable beverages. Punch is the national drink nowadays. Bishop Tegner tells us, in his modern Saga, how "King Ring sat on his throne on Christmas Eve and drank mead."

But King Ring's coarse, heroic epoch is dead, and King Oscar the Second, if he thirsted when on his throne, might almost be relied upon to ask for punch.

The consequence of Stockholm's excellent punch—for capable heads—and the prevailing contagion of festivity is this: as much money is needed here to live the life lived by the majority as most other European capitals exact.

For thirteence halfpenny you may dine in a refined and sufficient way at many pensions and restaurants, your waiter included. You will, however, pay just as much for but two glasses of punch in the sparkling salon of Berns in the evening. The Stockholm man about town will by no means be content with one music-hall between supper and bed-time. That means two or three "punches" per music-hall, which, in the long run, can be good neither for the purse nor the intellect.

"Ah!" said an enthusiastic Stockholmer to me one day, "we are not mean here in Sweden. We do not save, we spend.

We spend more than we earn, many of us.  
We enjoy ourselves."

But when I asked him who paid the piper eventually, he laughingly declined to face my idiom.

#### ON THE CLIFFS.

THE tide came in along the bay,  
The sunlight on the sea was streaming,  
And silver necklaces of spray  
Around the wave-worn rocks were gleaming.

High on a jutting crag she sat—  
A fairer never sat upon it;  
She wore a dainty sailor hat,  
'Twas more becoming than a bonnet.

Beside her, on the velvet sward,  
A gentle youth was idly lying,  
Whilst o'er the rocks the surges poured,  
And sent their pearls in thousands flying.

She held a novel in her hand,  
And read amid its glowing pages  
Of mail-clad knights and ladies bland  
Romancing in the Middle Ages.

How brave Sir Hugh, in armour bright,  
Won golden fame by actions thrilling;  
He did the gentler sex delight—  
In love and war his style was killing!

She laid the volume on her knees,  
And watched a ship that, far to leeward,  
With brown sails bending to the breeze,  
Was speeding from the harbour seaward.

When Love, that tenant of the rocks,  
Came dancing o'er the cliffs unbidden,  
And spying Violet's golden locks,  
Was soon deep in their meshes hidden.

Cupid, you rogue, what pranks you play  
On us poor unsuspecting mortals!  
You show us radiant realms of day  
Through rosy, amaranthine portals.

"I love you, dear," he whispered low,  
In tones so tremulous and tender,  
She could not answer him, for lo!  
Her life was lit with sudden splendour.

Beware the cliffs! There's danger there,  
For Love, that wanton, wayward fairy,  
Has woven subtle nets to snare  
Ingenuous youths and maids unwary.

He shoots his darts from laughing eyes,  
And sets young hearts with joy a-singing:  
But ah! sometimes the rascal flies  
While yet the wedding bells are ringing!

#### ST. LUKE'S SUMMER.

AFTER the heavy rains and heavier gales of the equinox, there frequently comes a spell of delicious calm, and the days of stress and storm are forgotten. This is the little summer of St. Luke: an interval, all too brief, in the process of the seasons, when nature seems to pause and draw breath. Mid October brings us hours of quiet sunshine, without wind or rain or cloud, and with just sufficient frost in the morning air to enable us to revel in the pleasant after-warmth.

The autumn has reached its prime, and wears its crown of gold. Daily the garment of the woods becomes more glorious. A tongue of flame sweeps across the great beech woods. Gossamer floats abundantly in the still air. The slight haze that rests early on the valley lifts gradually and reveals a pageant of surpassing beauty, flooded in a rich glow, and framed by the fair blue of the sky.

A soft grey veil that hid the hills this morning has completely disappeared. It is now nine o'clock, and the delicate curves of a great chalk down are sharply defined against a wall of blue. Its slopes face southwards; at present steeped in the brilliant sunlight of an October morning, undimmed by a particle of mist. Recent heavy rains, strong winds, and a touch of frost last night, have so refined and purified the atmosphere that every juniper bush stands out clear and distinct with its spot of shadow beneath. The red purple of the dogwood tints every coombe and fissure; dashes of warm yellow appear among the hazel copses; and, in the little fir wood towards the summit, orange streaks show among the larches.

The clear crisp air without stir or motion seems to magnify and diffuse the sunlight, and to deepen its mellow tone. What matter that two days ago the heavy clouds were dragged across these hills in drenching rain, or that the very brilliance of the atmosphere forbids us to count upon a long continuance of fine weather. Just now the picture is complete; and without any special glory of fading leaf, you realise to some extent the warmth and colour that an October sun-glow can produce. Close at hand is an old farmhouse. It possesses no architectural beauties whatever. Yet how the sunshine sparkles on the dull weather-worn bricks and tiles; how it softens and, at the same time, intensifies the green and amber mosses; and brings out every colour of the lichens that have clung for generations to roof, and wall, and barn, and paling. The pale yellow leaves of a group of limes absorb the beautiful glow; it is sent back in flashes of scarlet and gold from a single horse-chestnut, and bathes in a warm flood the grass of a little tangled orchard. It glistens on the webs that wreathe the briars and brambles outside; and twinkles on the beads of dew that hang on the brake fern and the long grass blades.

The martin nests underneath the eaves

are forsaken; for the house martins, the last of the swallow tribe to take their departure, headed south over a fortnight ago. With the swallows, all the summer migrants are now fled; the redwings are yet to come. Just beyond the litter of the farmyard, four black pigs are raking about a great heap of refuse; and pecking away close beside them are at least a score of grey wagtails, with backs of bluish grey and long grey tails. These are new arrivals, for the grey wagtail is an autumn visitant. They come as the pied wagtail (or dishwasher) leaves us. Very light and active they seem, and the colouring of their plumage most delicate. The name of this species of wagtail is deceptive, for it is not grey, but yellow, that is its most conspicuous colour. The throat and the upper part of the breast are a bright canary tint, with a crescent of jet black beneath. It is odd to see them moving about this black filth, keeping close to a pig's snout and forefeet, till at times it seems as if they must be trodden on. Birds of many kinds are attracted to the same heap. A number of young starlings are stalking to and fro, whistling and chattering a good deal. Branchers of a few weeks ago, they are just beginning to get their fuller plumage, and the brown coats are splashed with glossy black and purple feathers tipped with pearl. Every now and then, with a good deal of fuss and clatter, they make for one of the oaks in the meadow, keeping their wings stationary and expanded like a fan when entering the tree. A small flock of greenfinches are pecking about the edges of the rubbish, twittering as they fly off. There are several cock chaffinches, just recovered from their moult, each chiefly concerned to see that his neighbour does not get a choicer morsel than himself, and occasionally chasing him in a state of great excitement across the adjacent fields. Once or twice a couple of wagtails with dipping flight will go off in the same way, but without the vicious energy of the chaffinches. A few linnets are far less assertive; and, unable to elbow their way in the busy crowd, they retire to a hurdle close by, and sit there looking on, ruffling their feathers, and apparently envying the restless determination of the sparrows.

A rough and narrow lane leads upward and over the brow of the hill. In no hurry to climb the steep, it wanders round some empty cornfields, at first just a means of communication between them and the

farm. Yellow straws still cling to the little wayside oaks, and although in the shadier parts of the hedge bank the grasses are white and drenched with dew, there are still a few wild flowers left. But they are insignificant beside the array of colour furnished by fading and fallen leaf. The herb-robert still sends forth its persistent pink stars, but they seem pale indeed beside the vivid scarlet of the horse-chestnut or the deep crimson of the bird-cherry. Hawkweeds, ragwort, nipplewort, fleabane, spotted hypericum, and a few other yellow blossoms along the lane, are inconspicuous beneath the fiery tones of the hedge maples. The silverweed no longer hides its sulphur blooms in the roadside grasses; but the pale emerald, bronze, and buff tints of its fernlike leaves work a richer border than ever. In a sunny spot a wild strawberry ventures a timid bloom, and the white lips of the dead nettle cluster below. The lilac flowers of the scabious still brave the early frosts, a few purple heads of knapweed are thrust through the bunches of dead parsley, and the wild radish scatters its little pale crosses among the stubbles. Some stalks of campanula have one or two late bells, a few betony spikes show here there, and slender harebells swing among the dry grass bennets.

Many of the bushes of the lane are closely intertwined and overlaid with long sprays and festoons of the wild clematis, or old man's beard, till in parts the hedge seems to be composed of clematis and nothing else. Its woody stems look like ropes; the leaves have assumed a yellowish green, and the tufts of feathered seed-vessels lie upon them in a network of white silk. The elder-bushes have been rifled by the birds, but the sides of the lane are tinted with the pale buff and rose-pink of their fading leaves. Although the nuts are gone from the hazels, there is a plentiful store of berries in the hedgerows. They are not confined to the lane. Every depression in the chalk has its bushes, and every bush is heavy with berries. Perhaps the prettiest of all are the rose-coloured lobes of the spindle-tree. If opened, the seeds will be found enclosed in a further wrapping of brilliant orange. But the shrub, although by no means uncommon, must be looked for. It has a way of hiding itself among the other growths, and its berries seldom crown the hedge like the crimson fruit of the hawthorn, or the ruddy hips of the briar roses. Another

shrub easily overlooked is the alder buckthorn, with its smooth, oval, quivering leaves, and its little dark blue berries.

Long streamers of bryony add much to the life and beauty of the lane. I think if I had to give a specimen of the beauty of an English hedgerow, I would cull a spray of white bryony. For there are two perfectly distinct plants which go by the name of bryony, distinguished as the white and the black. Each is the sole British representative of a tropical order of plants. The black bryony belongs to the yam tribe; the white to that of the gourds, the tribe that has given us our cucumbers and melons. Both kinds are growing here. The white bryony is of very rapid growth, and passes through and among the bushes in the gentlest of curves. Among the climbing plants is there another that can quite equal for grace and elegance its vine-like leaves; its slender stems and spirals; its exquisite light-coloured flowers with their delicate veins; finally its rounded berries, at first the same green shade as leaf and stem, gradually turning orange or scarlet, and brightening the hedge long after the frosts have dried and shrivelled the rest of the plant? The berries of the black bryony are similar in colour, only larger, and during July and August they hang in the hedge like grapes. Each leaf is the shape of a heart, the uniform glossy green now changed to bronze, buff, purple, and bright yellow.

Not far off the lane is an overgrown chalk-pit, the sides clothed with big red hawthorns and purple aloes. A bird-cherry stands in the centre beneath, one mass of glowing, fiery colour. Scattered up and down are the clustering stems and hoary leaves of the little wayfaring-trees. These are a coarser species of viburnum, but the berries are flattened, and though red now, will turn black as winter approaches. They have none of the rich transparent beauty that belongs to the viburnum opulus or guelder rose. This latter shrub is now in all its glory, hung from root to crown with bunches of deep red berries. The guelder rose of the woods is quite different from the "snowball-tree" of the garden. The wild roses, too, are a snowy white, but almost flat in shape, and the singular feature about them is, that what at first sight we take to be the flower is only a chaplet of mock blossom, without stamen or pistil, intended to attract the winged insects to the central florets. While the pride of

the wild plant is its rich autumn fruit, the cultivated species bears only barren flowers.

The orange beak of a blackbird is busy on a bunch of carmine spindle fruit, till suddenly he is off with a noisy chuckle to a yew-tree. But a couple of missel-thrushes are in possession there, and the invader is mercurially driven back with harsh and angry cries. For the yew is laden with berries, set in their beautiful coral cups—berries dearly loved by the mistletoe-thrush, which forsakes the last clusters of the mountain ash for them. There seem to be a good many of these big birds about, for every now and then their grating note, like the winding of a rusty Dutch clock, mingles with the clatter of their wings as they hold the yew-trees against all comers. It is not easy to get a fair sight of them, but the white of their under wing-coverts distinguishes them from time to time as they slip round a big bush.

Upward still, as the lane winds round a piece of woodland, and a squirrel scampers across. He has exchanged his red summer coat for a winter fur of brown-grey. Up the bank he goes, drawing his long silver-tipped tail over the fallen leaf. With a gurgling, scolding chatter he darts up a larch to the second fork, then stops and looks back deliberately, pricking his ears, and wagging his tail vigorously as a cat does when angry. Further in the wood, a second squirrel sits on the fork of a beech, munching like a monkey a beech-nut held in his forepaws. The "mast" is ripe now, and the squirrels haunt the beeches all day. They have rifled the hazels, and the pine cones can wait awhile. The beech stems being smooth and polished, and generally bare of branches for a considerable distance, the squirrels climb the smaller trees and leap from them on to the broad fans of the higher beech boughs. Ripe beech-mast proves a great attraction also to the ring-doves, which visit the trees in foraging parties. Shy and wary, they are but little seen, and only the occasional flip-flop of their powerful wings tells where they have been feasting.

A flute-like note repeated once or twice is followed by a bubbling sound, and a glance upward reveals a nuthatch, a patch of dull orange-red on one of the branches. Now he is underneath, and his blue-grey back comes into view as he creeps along the horizontal bough to the main stem, and then begins travelling

head foremost down the tree. He has no doubt just wedged a hazel-nut in the trunk preparatory to forcing the shell with his beak. Now he is resting midway, his claws grasping the rough bark, and his head at right angles to his plump little body, showing the white spot on his throat. A dark streak drawn across his bright round eye looks like a continuation of the pointed beak. His present attitude is characteristic. The tree-creeper works a tree upwards, and his longer body, beak, and tail always curve to the tree trunk. The nuthatch seems equally at home in any position, while his short tail never gets in his way.

High winds and battering rains have thinned the leaves of the outer trees, so that it is possible to watch a good deal of the life of the wood from the lane. Nests that a short while ago were completely hidden are now visible. A loud "squawk, chawk," is followed by a flash of blue and white wings, and a couple of jays settle themselves among the top branches of an oak. Acorns at this season apparently furnish a repast to birds of usually very different appetites; but while the majority, like the pheasant, are content to help themselves to the fallen brown nuts that are now lying all about the grass of the meadows, the jay and the rook must pick theirs from the oak itself.

Not many sounds disturb the silence of these woods. Now and then comes the low pipe of a bullfinch; a thrush utters a stave, as if trying over his notes; a wren sings a short strain; or the sweet, leisurely cadence of the robin breaks the stillness. But the birds are intent on other matters than singing, and the most frequent sounds are the tap of a falling acorn or beech-mast, or the lingering rustle of another leaf seeking the broad bosom of mother earth.

As the lane reaches the hillside, the bushes increase in size considerably, till from fieldside hedges they become a tangle of forest growths. The tints, too, are further advanced here. Green and scarlet, russet and gold, brown and purple; the colours massed and intermingled in endless gradations and exquisite harmonies. Where the brilliant sunlight plays, they are intensified a hundredfold. Dark yews mingle with scarlet thorns and orange maples; feathery ash-trees overhang, their leaves now a pale olive tint. Privet and dogwood, viburnum and wild rose, tall brambles and elder bushes combine to produce a glowing

succession of warm hues and a wealth of autumn fruit. And still the clematis climbs to the topmost boughs, and over all but the changeless yews flings its pallid streamers like a robe. For a mile or more these towering hedgerows shut off the prospects around, and form a winding aisle in which to study to one's heart's content all the varied tones and mellow richness of the autumn. Then they cease suddenly. We are on the crisp, velvety turf of the downs, high up among the grey junipers, overlooking the great beech woods of the river valley, and a broad, beaming landscape beyond.

## TWO LETTERS.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

LETTICE had always been considered the beauty of the family. She was not clever like Emma, nor musical like Lenore. She was simply beautiful and nothing more. Men seemed to find that quite enough.

There were four of us, Lettice, Emma, Lenore, and myself. I was the youngest, and occupied the proud position of being Lettice's bosom friend. We all lived in a great rambling barrack of a house in the little seaside town of Brunton, and our father was the Rector of the church there. Our income was not by any means large; our visiting list was soon exhausted. It may easily be seen, therefore, that the chance of four pretty, penniless lasses getting "wooded, and married, and a'," was very remote indeed. Still, we felt we were entitled to build high hopes upon Lettice.

She was tall, and fair as a lily, and almost as pale. But then her cheeks wore the creamy, healthy tint which to a right-minded man is worth all the rosy cheeks in existence. She had crisp, golden hair that always looked enchanting, whether it were smooth or whether it were rough; a pair of the deepest blue eyes that ever it has been my luck to see; and a slender, willowy figure, which in some people's eyes was her chief charm.

And yet Lettice was wasting her sweetness on the desert air. Twenty-five, and still unwed!

Of course, there was always Arthur Wells, who had been desperately in love with her from his youth up, but then he



did not count at all. Indeed, Lettice was cruel enough on one occasion to refer to him as "an alleviating circumstance," which, considering his intense adoration for her, was hardly feeling.

Arthur Wells was old Sir Ludovic Wells's nephew, and, had there been no other Wells in the case, would without doubt have succeeded to his uncle's title and estates, the latter bringing in a respectable rent-roll of five thousand a year. But then, as the Fates would have it, Sir Ludovic owned two stalwart, handsome sons; and nothing was more unlikely than that they should be polite enough to remove themselves from this troublesome world, in order to leave the stage clear for their cousin Arthur.

No; Ludovic the younger and Henry his brother thrive and waxed great in strength and health. There was not the ghost of a chance for Arthur, who could hardly have the audacity to propose seriously to the beautiful Lettice that they should shut themselves up together for life in a semi-detached villa, on three hundred pounds a year, to murmur at the price of coal and butter! No, the thing could not be done, and Arthur was wise enough to resign himself to fate.

There were very few young men of any kind in Brunton, and those of a desperately ineligible character. There was the curate—a knock-kneed, shambling creature, with bright red hair and green eyes—and the doctor, a struggling young practitioner, who, to judge from appearances, might possibly be able to afford to marry when Lettice was well on to forty years of age.

Affairs were certainly not very promising. We should blush unseen for ever unless something happened. We did not blush unseen for ever.

One day in early summer, when the dog-roses were at the zenith of their delicate beauty, my father came in to us, as we were all sitting at work in our own especial sanctum, with a letter in his hand.

Here let me say that my father was the most unworldly of men. He liked us "girls" to be always about him. I believe it would have grieved him to the heart if he had had to part with one of us. Such a thing as matrimony, especially looked upon from a mercenary point of view, never even occurred to him at all. We girls had the sense to keep our matrimonial chatter and hopes to ourselves. The letter which he had just received, and which was destined to elate us, only depressed him.

There was rather a worried expression on his placid brow.

"An old college friend of mine has just written to me, girls," he announced, "to ask me to look after his son, who is coming here for a month or so for his health."

We pricked up our ears at once.

"Who is it?" we asked in chorus.

We knew that father had known some very "big wigs" in those far-off College days of his, although he was too modest to even mention them. Was Fate about to smile upon us at last?

"The young man is a foreigner," said my father slowly, "and his name is the Count da Castello."

To say that our eyes nearly fell out of our heads at this piece of news would be but a poor and feeble way of expressing our astonishment.

A Count—a real live Count, certain to be rich, and in all probability handsome! We all looked at Lettice, who blushed consciously. The fish that was about to walk into the net was almost a whale in size and importance.

"Why, papa," said Lenore, "whatever is he coming to this poky little place for?"

My father flushed slightly. He would have been less embarrassed if a crossing-sweeper had asserted claims as to ancient friendship.

"His father and I were great friends long ago, my dears. He is kind enough to wish his son to make my acquaintance, and as the place is very healthy and the Count is not very strong, he wishes him to be here for a while. Of course he will stay at the hotel. The Duc da Castello writes a very kind letter," he added, looking at the paper in his hand. We had none of us before ever had the least idea that my father had ever spoken to a Duke in his life, and though it was but a foreign Duke—well, a Duke's a Duke for all that.

Of course we had dozens of questions to ask, all of which my father answered with his usual gentle patience.

The young Count had been in England before—oh, yes, and could speak English fairly well. He would probably be about six or seven-and-twenty—not a young boy by any means. Rich—yes, he was certainly rich—very wealthy indeed, he believed. As to how we were to amuse him, that was quite a different thing. He supposed young people always got on together somehow. Luckily it was summer, and we could golf and play tennis to our hearts' content. He hoped we would do

our best to make things pleasant for the stranger.

"Poor dear daddy," said Lenore, with a half-remorseful smile as he went out at the door. "He has no idea what a mercenary, money-hunting lot we are, or he wouldn't press us to be quite so pleasant."

"But after all, it is glorious news," said Emma meditatively. "I do envy you, Lettice!"

She sighed as she looked at herself in the glass.

"No one has a chance when you are by," she added discontentedly. "I am quite nice-looking when you are out of the room."

We all laughed, and began to discuss our wardrobe, and what were the most suitable costumes for fascinating the foreign eye. Lettice was unusually silent. Indeed, she had hardly spoken at all. She smiled faintly when we suggested all the fine things she could do for us when once she was the Countess da Castello, and told us with sensible severity not to be so foolish as to count our chickens before they were hatched.

"I never yet knew the man who didn't admire you," said Emma sturdily. "Take all the men about here, for instance—they are a precious poor lot, still they are men—and see if I'm not right! Mr. Potter fell head over ears in love at first sight, and Dr. Hemingway would propose to-morrow if he thought you would accept him. As for Arthur Wells——"

She paused with a significant shrug of the shoulders that spoke volumes. Lettice gathered up her work in her arms and went out of the room with a slight flush on her fair face. In spite of her light talk about Arthur Wells, there were times when we were none of us very sure as to what were her real feelings on the subject. Not even to me—me, the favoured confidante—did she ever say one syllable about him save in a jesting way.

But she began to talk of her own accord that night about the Count da Castello.

"I wonder what he will be like," she said meditatively, as she unwound her long fair hair and began to brush it slowly before retiring for the night.

We shared the same room, and many had been the girlish confidences and hopes that those four walls had heard.

"He will be very dark, of course," I replied, "and perhaps handsome. But that doesn't matter so much if he is nice. I rather like ugly men."

Lettice went on brushing out the veil of fair hair that fell far below her waist.

"The most important thing of all is that he should fall in love with you," I went on from my perch on the deep, old-fashioned window-seat, where I was sitting gazing out into the starry June night; "and, fortunately, there isn't much doubt about that."

"You are a silly child!" returned my sister, with rather ungrateful petulance. "You think, because all the weedy creatures here admire me, that a rich and handsome foreigner of title is certain to ask me to be his wife. Absurd!"

"Should you have him if he did?" I asked curiously.

"Without the slightest hesitation."

I always liked matrimonial discussions with Lettice, because we held such very different views on the subject. I, being young and sentimental, was all for love; Lettice, with all the stern, practical common-sense of twenty-five unmarried years, was all for money.

"You might not like him," I suggested, after a pause.

"It would take a great deal to make me dislike a rich young Count," returned Lettice, with a curl of her lip. "I am more tired than I can tell you of the life we are leading now. I want to enjoy myself, and see the world, and be admired," she added frankly.

I clasped my hands round my knees, and began again.

"Supposing that you were unhappy after you married him? Supposing you saw some one else you liked better?"

"I shouldn't be unhappy after I was married," returned my sister decidedly.

"I am not in the least sentimental."

"I think it is very wrong indeed to marry for money," I said, with sudden virtue.

"So do I—in theory. But now and then one can't help oneself. It is generally the wrong man who has the fortune," she added, with unusual bitterness.

I determined to approach a subject on which I had always felt the deepest curiosity, but which I had never ventured to seriously allude to before.

"Lettice!"

"Well?"

"Do you—are you—how do you feel—really, I mean—about Arthur Wells?"

Lettice turned her head away, but not before I had seen her flush.

"He is a nice boy," she said carelessly,

"and so useful and pleasant, too. I am very fond of Arthur."

"But you wouldn't marry him?"

"*Pas si bête,* my dear. I should be unhappy after that marriage, if you like."

"Why?"

"I should feel I had thrown myself away; and, what is more, I am afraid I should make him feel it, too. I put aside the idea years ago, Ellen, and Arthur knows it."

"It is very hard if—if you like him," I remarked, a little surprised at her extreme calmness.

"I like him quite as much as I shall ever like any one; but I dare say that isn't very much, after all. At any rate, it is not enough to make me sacrifice my whole future life for his sake."

She plaited her soft hair closely as she spoke, and smiled at her own fair image in the glass.

"It's very funny that I don't feel more," she remarked, half to herself; "but at the same time it is extremely convenient."

I did not believe myself that she was nearly as heartless as she chose to make out, and in spite of the handsome phantom of the future, I rather preferred the present suitor.

But nothing would induce Lettice to talk any more about him that night. She had put aside her fancy for him once and for all with a firm hand, and she was not the kind of girl to be entrapped into half-sentimental admissions of regret.

Three days later the Count arrived upon the scene.

I do not think we have any of us ever forgotten the afternoon he came. We were sitting in the big old sunny drawing-room just before tea. All the windows were open, and the scent of the sweet-briar hedges, for which the Rectory was famous, floated in and filled the air with pungent fragrance. Lettice was sitting at the window with the sun shining full upon her fair head, turning every thread of it to deep, deep gold.

"My dear," said my father's voice suddenly behind her, "let me introduce my old friend's son to you. Count da Castello, this is my eldest daughter Lettice."

She turned with a swift, surprised flush on her usually pale face, and I thought I had never seen her look so lovely. I was not surprised at the look of bold and open admiration with which the Count regarded her.

He was undoubtedly an extremely handsome man, but for all that I felt a thrill of unutterable repugnance towards him. I wondered if Lettice felt it too. He was tall and slender, with clearly-cut features and a haughty, aristocratic air. He was dark as an Italian brigand, handsome as a Spanish toreador. His eyes were almost sombre in their velvet blackness.

But there was no doubt whatever that he was very much struck with Lettice. Father asked him to tea as a matter of course, and ten minutes later we were all sitting round that famous table of ours, which seemed to be able to hold any number of extra people without inconvenience.

The Count had a soft and mellow voice, and what I suppose must be called fascinating manners. He spoke English to perfection, with just a touch of foreign accent which made it all the more taking; but every now and then he lapsed unconsciously into Italian, correcting himself with a slight laugh at his own forgetfulness, and he invariably addressed us as "*Signorina*."

He professed himself delighted with the quaint gabled Rectory and its wandering rooms. There was an old-world flavour, he declared, in the shabby, spindle-legged furniture, the old blue china, and the oak-panelled parlours. He raved, too, over the odour of sweet-briar, which pervaded everything with its wholesome fragrance. Its perfume was, he said, "so fresh, so English."

The budding flowers in the garden, too, came in for a share of ecstatic admiration as we wandered idly thither after tea was over. The Count was disposed to admire anything and everything in his present frame of mind.

Lettice was quieter than usual. Certainly the Count was enthusiastic and ardent enough for both. She need take no trouble whatever. He was plainly at her feet already. He was apparently going to succumb without a struggle. Unless, indeed, he were one of those masculine flirts who make love to every pretty woman they meet with almost equal ardour. Time and the future would show that. At present he talked to no one but Lettice, and had eyes for no one but Lettice. So far everything was as it should be.

When he had gone I asked her how she liked him. Emma and Lenore were loud in their praises—so handsome, so fascinating, with such enchanting manners! And his eyes! Had we noticed his eyes?

"Yes, I noticed his eyes," said Lettice. If it had not been dusk I should have thought that she looked troubled and uneasy. As it was, I fancied the fast-falling twilight might have deceived me.

"Do you like him?" I persisted.

She roused herself from a meditative reverie with a start and a distinct shiver.

"I don't know, Ellen," she answered slowly. "But I should not like to have him for my enemy."

## CHAPTER II.

Two days later the Count sent Lettice an enormous bouquet of beautiful roses—a truly foreign way of showing admiration, as we English country-bred damsels thought. We could not imagine where he had got such flowers from—great deep crimson-hearted roses and exquisite fragile white ones, almost every variety, indeed, that it is possible to imagine. We thought he must have bribed some gardener to give him the contents of a greenhouse whose owner was temporarily absent; but afterwards we learned that he had telegraphed to London for them.

Lettice sat with the gorgeous flowers in her lap with an odd expression on her face, while we clustered round her and loudly extolled the Count and congratulated her on her good fortune. She did not say anything for a while; then she swept the roses with a sudden petulant movement from her lap to the floor; some of the scented petals fell from the heart of the flowers and lay upon the carpet.

"I wish he had not sent them," she said, with an almost violent impatience in her voice.

I stooped to pick the lovely, innocent things up. As I did so a shadow darkened the doorway, and, looking up, to my horror I saw that the Count himself had been a witness of this little scene. Possibly, too, he had heard Lettice's petulant remark. He had followed his gift almost immediately.

"Am I so unfortunate that my little offering is displeasing to the Signorina?" he asked politely from the doorway, where he remained standing.

His eyes—the eyes that we all admired so much, and which Lettice shuddered away from—were fixed on her face with a half-mocking, half-dominant expression in their sombre depths.

Lettice blushed crimson and muttered hastily something about his "kindness," and that she was "very fond of flowers."

"So I thought until just now," said the young Count, with his most imperturbable expression of countenance, advancing up the room.

We began to feel uneasy and embarrassed. It was an uncomfortable scene altogether, and for once in our lives we felt rather ashamed of Lettice. How could she treat the Count's present with such impatient ingratitude? One by one we disappeared from the room, and they were left together.

"He is certain to propose," said Emma, when we had safely reached our own sanctum, "if she treats him at all properly. What a pity he came in just then, and how stupid of Lettice to be in such a temper! I only wish he would send roses to me."

"I expect it is only a foreign custom and doesn't mean much," I remarked astutely. "He may not be in love with her after all."

"You have only got to look at his eyes to see that," said Emma very decidedly. "He never takes them off her, and he looks at her in such a way—I am sure I should feel quite uncomfortable."

"I wonder what will happen, and what he is saying to her now!" said Lenore musingly. "Foreigners are so quick in things of this kind."

I said nothing, but like the parrot in the story, I thought the more.

Emma was quite right in saying that the young Count was desperately in love. There was a sort of fierceness in his eyes when he looked at Lettice, that boded ill for her in the future if she crossed or thwarted him. It was a curious affair all through—shrinking repulsion on one side, combined with a strange fascination, and fiery, passionate, overbearing love on the other. I wondered which would win the day.

I had not long to wait. As Lenore remarked, foreign courtship is evidently carried on in a very rapid fashion. At the end of a fortnight, Lettice came into our room one day after she had been walking about with the Count, and threw herself into a chair with something very like a groan.

"What is the matter?" I asked from my seat in the deep window, where I was reading, unobserved.

"Oh, are you there, Ellen?" said my sister, with rather a vexed expression.

Then after a pause she added:

"Well, you would have to know some day, and you may just as well know first as last. Besides, I would rather you

heard it before the others. The Count has proposed to me, Ellen."

I dropped my novel, finding a real romance more interesting than the fictitious personages in the book.

"When?" I demanded breathlessly.

"About a quarter of an hour ago—in the rose-garden."

She began to play absently with some flowers in her belt, pulling them slowly to pieces in rather a vindictive fashion. They were very rare flowers, and I knew the Count had given them to her.

"What did you say," I asked curiously, "and what did he say?"

"He?"

She laughed a little, and then sighed.

"Oh, the usual rhodomontade, of course! Men are very much alike all the world over. Only the Count is—is—more so!"

"That means that he made desperate love to you, I suppose," I said slowly.

"Well, yes, that is what it amounts to."

She threw away the flowers she had been playing with suddenly.

"I tell you, Ellen, the man terrifies me," she said, in a very different tone from the one she had been using. "He is so earnest, so fierce, so—mad!"

I looked at her in some surprise. Her face was quite white, and her lips were trembling. It was very unlike Lettice to be so moved about anything. I got down from my perch in the window-seat, and put a protecting arm about her.

"But you needn't marry him, Lettice dear, if you feel like that about him. Of course, we all talked a great deal of nonsense about your being a Countess and all that—and it would have been very nice, too—but it certainly isn't worth while being so wretched about it."

She sat quite still, breathing rather quickly. Then she got up and began to take off her things.

"I have promised to marry him, Ellen, and I cannot draw back now. Besides, I have no wish to. I shall be very rich, I shall have a title, and my husband will adore me. What more can I want? Should I do better if I were to stay on here and end by marrying Dr. Hemingway?"

She laughed a little, but I couldn't.

"Lettice, I am sure you will be horribly unhappy," I said earnestly. "You ought not to marry him if you don't like him."

"I do like him—immensely," she said contradictorily, "and I have been very foolish to talk as I have been doing. The only fault I can find with him is that he

loves me too much—and that is certainly a fault that time will mend. Come, Ellen," she added gaily, "don't look at me with those desperate, frightened eyes. The Count won't eat me, and I mean to be very happy."

She kissed me, and we went downstairs together, hand in hand. But I did not feel easy, for all that. That the Count had some influence over her I had no doubt, but it was an influence that had elements of repulsion in it. It struck me that a boa constrictor and a rabbit might very well stand as examples of the relations between Lettice and the Count. But these sentiments I kept to myself.

Lettice announced her engagement to the family the next day. She was then in possession of a magnificent diamond betrothal ring, and the Count had received my father's permission for the match.

The Count himself was quite perfect in his behaviour to us all. He came every day after this, and bought us innumerable and costly presents. The gifts he showered on Lettice had legion for their name. I don't think I ever saw a man more devotedly attached to a woman. And yet Lettice could not prevent herself, try as she would, from treating him with cold indifference. The Count seemed to love her all the more for her caprices.

He often talked to me about her, as he knew she liked me better than the rest. His handsome face and splendid eyes would light up with pleasure at the mere mention of her name. Foreigners are proverbially less reticent than their English brethren in their "affaires de cœur," and I was the recipient of many curious rhapsodies on the subject of my sister's charms.

"Only to think," said Da Castello to me one day, when Lettice had left us alone together for a few minutes, "only to think that if I had not come to England this time I should never have seen her! My beautiful lily—the one woman in the world for me! What should I have done without her?"

His eyes were following her retreating form with an expression of ecstatic tenderness in them.

I brought him down to earth again.

"You would have married some one else," I said bluntly.

"Never!" said the Count, turning his mysterious eyes on me. "I should have gone through life without having found my twin soul."

"You might not have found your twin soul, but you would have married all the

same. Besides, how do you know that Lettice is your twin soul?"

"By the power of my love for her," he answered fiercely. "I think I love her as no man ever loved woman before." ("They all say that," was my mental note.) "If she were in the furthest depths of hell I should go in search of, and rescue her."

I understood why Da Castello sometimes terrified his English sweetheart. Certainly he had a very strong way of putting things, and his eyes had a glow in them which was not altogether tranquillising.

"That is all very well now," I replied, "but how about the future? You don't really understand Lettice, and I am quite sure she does not understand you. A foreigner can never hope to comprehend an Englishwoman."

Da Castello gave a short laugh.

"Love has no nationality," he observed, with superb scorn; "when two souls love each other, they don't stop to ask whether their bodies are French or German."

"No, but they sometimes fall out about the cooking afterwards," I rejoined smartly.

"You are a funny child, Ellen," he remarked patronisingly. "As if Lettice and I should ever fall out about anything! As for such a sordid question as cookery——" he shrugged his shoulders in a truly foreign fashion, expressive of the deepest disdain, and became silent.

I remembered that possibly, as he was so immensely rich, the question of cookery might not be a vexed one between them. If they had been poor it would have been a different thing.

Da Castello began to rhapsodise again.

"How fair she is!" he murmured, his eyes soft and dreamy once more; "so fair and cold, like a snow image! And her eyes are blue and cold too, like some of your tranquil English lakes."

"I wonder you admire coldness so much," I said shortly; "but certainly Lettice gives you plenty of it."

For by this time, in spite of the magnificence of my future brother-in-law's presents, and the general impeachability of his behaviour, I highly disapproved of the match. I was convinced that Lettice would be, and was, wretched.

"That is what I like," he answered. "She is so different from other women; she never tries to attract; she is so royally indifferent."

Possibly the young, handsome, and wealthy Count had not found "royal indifference" a distinguishing trait of the average

woman. But could he not distinguish between indifference and repulsion? It appeared not. He went on after a pause: "Is it not singular, Ellen, our names begin with the same letter even! That is one proof the more that we were meant for each other."

His name was Luigi. Love likes to harp on these pleasant trifling coincidences, but to me they appeared to be childish.

"Then if her name had been Hannah, or Maria, you wouldn't have fallen in love with her, I suppose?" I asked him sarcastically. But he answered quite frankly:

"I do not know. One cannot tell, but no doubt, as we were born under the same star, I should have loved her under any name. She is my fate. She has been kept for me. But what is the use of discussing these things with you, my little Ellen; you, who believe neither in fate nor love!"

"Nor astrology," I wound up, for a tendency to belief in astrology was one of the Count's strongest weaknesses.

"Nor astrology," he said, quite good-humouredly. "So you see there is nothing left for me to talk about."

I wondered privately what he talked about to Lettice, who took no more interest in the above subjects than I did myself. For did she not trample love under foot, defy fate, and scoff at the Count's horoscopes?

It appeared, however, that Da Castello talked to her on one subject, and one only. It is left to the reader to guess which one that is. Lettice's indifference did not pique him. He liked his little snow image all the better for its iciness.

It may be supposed that so ardent a lover as the Count did not let the grass grow under his feet. He was impatient to marry his fair bride, and carry her back to his vast estates in sunny Italy. I was the unwilling listener to the conversation which took place between them when Da Castello first broached the subject to her.

I was sitting in the drawing-room with the windows wide open to admit the warm breath of July air, and the Count and Lettice were seated on a rustic bench immediately beneath it. I did not know they were there for some time; they were so silent. And when they began to speak I did not like to attract attention by moving away.

"Dearest," said Luigi da Castello, with an ineffable tenderness in his deep tones, "you have not given me my answer yet. Why do you delight in torturing me so?"

He evidently referred to some question he had previously asked her. There was a ring of fear as well as of impatience in Lettice's tones as she answered him.

"We are very well as we are. You are always in such a hurry. I cannot possibly decide anything yet."

Perhaps on this occasion the much-vaunted and much-admired indifference and iciness of his divinity were not quite so much to her lover's taste as usual.

"You don't understand how I want you, dear. I long to bear you away to my own sunny land, the fairest bride that Italy has ever seen."

A slight and scornful laugh was the only answer she gave.

"When will you tell me?" he urged fiercely. "When will you let me know? Why should we not be married at once? What is there to hinder us?"

"Hundreds of things."

"If you loved me as much as I love you, you would find no obstacle to our union."

"But I don't love as you do," said Lettice, in a troubled voice. "I have told you that before."

"I know you have been frankness and sincerity itself with me. I adore you for that little icy air of indifference. I shall soon teach you to change your nature."

She stirred a little uneasily.

"I shall never alter, Luigi," she said, after a pause. "I think it is my duty to tell you that I shall never be different. I have no very strong feelings as you have. If you think I shall not satisfy you——"

She broke off.

"You do satisfy me—just as you are. You are an angel of sweetness, and coldness, and purity. I envy no man alive. I have won my ideal. When will she be mine—mine utterly?"

He bent down and kissed her hand. I heard the salute distinctly, and the slight shiver that followed it. Poor Lettice! What a blind fool the man was, not to see that her indifference would not take long to turn to hatred! But then Love is and always has been blind. When his eyes are opened he is no longer Love.

"I cannot tell," she said, in a low voice, in answer to his last question.

"Do you expect me to go on in this way for ever?" demanded the eager lover.

"For ever! And we have been engaged for only three weeks."

"Three centuries rather."

She rose with a very decided movement from the bench.

"I will not fix a day," she cried angrily.

"I will never marry you at all if you tease me so about it. Why cannot you be content to wait like other men?"

Perhaps she had Arthur Wells and his patient, hopeless waiting in her mind. What was a rule for a sensible young Englishman, however, could not be expected to apply to her fiery Italian Count.

Da Castello seized on her last words and repeated them with a frown.

"Like other men? What do you know about other men?" he said.

There was thunder in his voice.

"Nothing," she answered hastily. "I only meant that in England we are not used to such short engagements—the idea is strange, and—and——"

She raised her eyes with a half-terrified appeal in them to his face, as if to impress the truth of her words upon him.

"That is all," she repeated nervously.

He bent and kissed her hand again. His trust in her was almost piteously absolute.

"You must remember that we Italians are an impatient, hot-blooded race," he said to her, with an apologetic smile, "and we do not know the meaning of delay. But I will wait for you, my queen, were it half a lifetime, if such is your desire. I will trust to the power of my love, that my probation will not be long."

He was very much, oh, very much in earnest! I heard Lettice sigh as she turned away from her too handsome, too devoted lover.

There were, doubtless, moments in her life when she would have preferred from him flagrant and open neglect.

For of such strange caprices is woman made.

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

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*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER V. THREE STRIPES AND A CROWN.

FOR each company in a regiment there is a Colour-Sergeant. The rank is an honourable one, the position coveted; not without its dangers, as the bitter experience of many a man can testify. Given a lax and lazy Captain, and responsibilities rest upon the Colour-Sergeant which he is in many cases quite unfit for. Large sums of money pass through his hands; it is possible that temptation may assail him. Still he has greatness thrust upon him, for as the youngest subaltern carries the sacred burden of the colours—his young heart oftentimes filled with high and noble dreams of how he may one day be called upon to guard that treasure in time of battle—the Colour-Sergeants guard both flag and bearer. Not, however, always successfully, as we know by the story of the boy hero of the Crimean War, whose heart was pierced by the bullets that only reached him through the flag he had wrapped about him, and clutched so closely even in the death-gasp.

Three stripes and a crown. These are the badges of honour carried by the Colour-Sergeant, and as a regiment of full strength has ten companies, there are ten Colour-Sergeants; and yet it had become a strange habit in the Hundred and Ninety-Third to speak of the Colour-Sergeant, number one (Grenadier) company, as "the" Colour-Sergeant. The Sergeant-Major himself was scarcely oftener spoken of by the

definite article, though enjoying an honourable isolation as to rank. What is that wonderful personality possessed by some men and women which marks them from among their fellows? How hard it is to define it, and yet how irresistible is its power! A person possessing it is not long a member of any community without making him or herself felt. Others circle round, as it were, and without design the new-comer becomes a centre; the strong and vivid personality conquers, sways, constrains.

The choir of the dingy military chapel comprised two Colour-Sergeants, and yet, when Alison Drew said to her cousin: "The Colour-Sergeant has brought us a new chant," that young lady did not ask for any more definite description. Colour-Sergeant number one company was sufficiently indicated.

"How kind—how nice!" she said, with one of her sweet smiles.

Major Henneker's daughter may be said to have been almost always smiling, even her tears being of the April sort; but with Alison the sunshine was rarer; all the brighter though, perhaps, for that.

As the two girls entered the chapel, Mrs. Musters rose slowly and with dignity from the organ. Perhaps "organ" is the best name; but in truth it was a complex sort of instrument, a sort of cross between an organ proper and a harmonium, having to be blown into like the former instrument, but falling short of the size and dignity that might have been expected. Mrs. Musters loved to handle this instrument, but it resented her interference and did dreadful things under her manipulations, at which times the doctor was wont to look solemnly round, making a baton of a roll of music, and defying the world to



raise a smile. Taking a mean advantage, it must be confessed, of her lord's fealty, Mrs. Musters had been known to warble a certain ditty called "Melancholy Jane" at a Soldiers' Evening, and such was the love borne to the genial doctor by the Hundred and Ninety-Third, that the lugubrious strain was actually encored; a fact that no one, in the regiment or out of it, was ever allowed to forget.

It was evident to Alison that her entrance into the chapel had broken in upon some sort of homily being suitably delivered by Dr. Musters, that gentleman displaying all the symptoms of an interrupted orator.

"We thought you were not coming," said Mrs. Musters with a grim smile, evidently of the opinion that entire absence was better than unseemly interruption.

Then, with the air of one who resumes a function that has been broken into, the doctor took up his parable. "I really must ask you—all of you—to be more careful with regard to time. I am deeply impressed with the importance of this matter, because the efforts of our good friend, Gunner Grimes, though by no means uncalled for, are apt to be—ahem!—a trifle too audible to the general congregation, and I must say that to hear: 'Far from my heavenly home—hurry up,' or 'Onward, Christian Soldiers—get along, do!' is far from a suitable addendum to the hymns in question, nor yet seemly in a—er—er—" here the doctor glanced round the far from stately proportions of the chapel, stumbling for a word. But Mrs. Doctor came to the rescue.

"A sacred edifice," she said solemnly, folding her hands in her lap as her manner was.

"Quite so; in a sacred edifice—such as—er—this."

"I'm sure, sir," put in Gunner Grimes with aggrieved face and voice, "if I could get 'em along with easy-goin' ways I would; but they're that rumgumcious—and then there's this boy here, he's a well-intentioned chap, but his cadences leave a lot to be wished for. There's a deal in cadence, sir, when you come to singing in churches—"

The doctor coughed; Mrs. Musters fidgeted on her seat. That was the worst of Gunner Grimes: when he got a social opening, you never knew what he would be at. Meanwhile, the unfortunate drummer-boy whose "cadence" was at fault, looked abject; the more so because one or two of his fellows displayed a painfully acute interest in the proceedings.

"Whiles I've got the ear of the meetin'," continued Gunner Grimes, "I'd like to say as I don't consider Private McMurdock always treats me fair like. Sir, more than onces he's cut me short in the matter of blowin', and took the wind out of my best fancy bits—"

The aggrieved face of Private McMurdock at this appeared over the back of the compound instrument into which he was in the habit of blowing, at times, it must be confessed, somewhat spasmodically. On the other hand, Gunner Grimes was, upon occasion, given to ornament his inevitable anthem solo with such turns and twirls, such roudades and quaverings, that it was suggestive of a plant all over tendrils; the original melody being well-nigh obscured. It was also true that, at such moments, Private McMurdock would suddenly stop supplies, and—with a faint wail like that of the celebrated dying duck in a thunderstorm—the organ would become dumb, and the ambitious roudade, deserted and alone, flutter, like a winged bird to the ground.

"McMurdock should certainly try to be even in his supplies," said the doctor—McMurdock ducked at this—"but, on the other hand, you know, Grimes, you are apt sometimes to be a trifle"—here the top of McMurdock's head and two gleaming eyes appeared again above the surface—"just a trifle too elaborate; simplicity, after all, is the thing to be aimed at. Ta, ta, ta!" and here the improvised baton gently smote the top of the organ.

What a representative group was that gathered together! Just one of those groups that one looks back upon in years to come with a sigh, realising how all are scattered far and wide, and the dear old regimental "camaraderie," that, in spite of all small rifts within the lute, was so close and dear a thing, rent and torn asunder.

At the organ, Alison, her sweet, grave eyes upon the music; her cousin's laughter-loving eyes glinting with mischief as Gunner Grimes airs his grievances; a group of band-boys, with voices that apparently come out of the top of their heads, delighted to be free from the professional control of Herr Schaffenhäusser, the bandmaster, and under the milder amateur sway of the doctor; two or three men from the ranks, very much in earnest over the work in hand, painfully so sometimes, and a couple of non-coms.—one of them the Colour-Sergeant of number one company. His tall inches well become the

"Grenadiers"; his manner is gentle, yet dignified and reserved; his voice a full, sweet tenor; his dark face, with close-cropped locks and trim moustache, has a worn look hardly in keeping with his seven-and-twenty years; and as he stands his attitude is less suggestive of drill than that of his comrade in rank, a short, fussy man, good at heart, but rather apt to worry the men over trifles.

Then there is Captain Hugh Dennison, his hand just a thought tremulous as he turns over the music for Alison; and Lieutenant Blizzard, whose acquaintance we made on a previous painful occasion, whose voice is as feeble as his face, and who persists in beating time diligently, no matter how the doctor frowns.

As to Mrs. Musters, sitting there with her hands folded in her ample lap, as is her custom, chaperoning the whole affair, and fully convinced that no business at all would be got through if she were not there, it cannot be denied that her tongue is always as the pen of a ready writer, and occasionally as sharp as a two-edged sword; she is, in some ways, a good-hearted creature, and, perhaps, the regiment is apt to look upon her through the reflected light of her husband's affection and loyalty. As for the doctor himself, with his baton beating the most perfect time, his kindly grey eyes watching every member of the choir in turn, his ears pricked to detect a false note, and his deep and unflagging interest in "the soldier" collectively, we know what sort of a person he is, and how his influence binds and welds together the corps to which he belongs, as the mortar welds the bricks of a building.

It having been fully resolved that a vast and unanimous effort should be made to keep up the time briskly, to shun dragging, and to get on without the spur of Gunner Grimes' too audible asidea—Private McMurdock also having been adjured to keep the supply of wind "more uniform," and keep the action of the bellows smooth and free from unseemly jumps and jerkings—they were just starting upon the hymn for next Sunday evening, when Dr. Musters suddenly tapped the top of the organ sharply to command silence, and then, bending over the organist, asked softly:

"Where is our friend Carbonel? We want more than one tenor for the proper rendering of this hymn. Ah! here he is"—for at that moment the chapel door opened stealthily, as it were, and admitted, not Lieutenant Fred Carbonel, but

two somewhat shamefaced young warriors, who came in as though decidedly uncertain of an enthusiastic welcome. One was Ensign Green, no longer overburdened with nose; the other a short, square-set youngster, with fierce bristling moustache by way of a set-off against his evident youthfulness—in a word, "Verrinder of Ours." Well indeed might these two look sheep-faced, for between them both they had not the voice even of a young crow in trouble. They were impostors, and they knew it. They also knew that everybody else knew it. At their entrance soldiers and band-boys looked supernaturally solemn—a sure sign of intuitions. Alison's gentle eyes took a look of reproach; her cousin's mirthful ones dropped; while Mrs. Musters's ample mouth opened like a trap, and her shadowless orbs grew round.

"Have you brought a message for the doctor?" she said, with cruel but unconscious irony, and the intruding warriors blushed; but Verrinder proved the bolder of the two.

"No," he said, advancing meekly but surely, "we came to help, don't you know."

"But you have neither of you any voice," persisted the lady.

The doctor, seeing that things were becoming a little personal, here interposed.

"Where is Carbonel, do you know?" he said, rather sharply. "We can't do without him very well."

The Ensign looked mysterious, and spoke low.

"He's writing letters; you know his way—reams and reams—wading in ink. He won't have done till two minutes before the letter corporal leaves the quarters—'pon my honour he won't—never does. We thought we might do instead of him, don't you know;" this with the calmest impudence possible, but with a pleading glance at the back of Alison's head.

"Just so—thought we might do instead," echoed Verrinder, with a sidelong look at the Major's daughter. But that young lady was quite absorbed in the coming hymn, beating time with a slender finger on the margin of her book.

"It is no use waiting for Carbonel, then, you think?" said the doctor in a tentative manner.

"Not a bit," replied Verrinder, with decision; "he was only half through page fourteen when we left."

"That decides it," replied the doctor, with a twinkle in his eye. "Now then, Gunner Grimes—quick march."

Why Gunner Grimes always led the choir it would perhaps have been difficult to say. He had edged himself into the position, as it were, and wore the calm and dignified demeanour of a born leader of men. Accompanied by two other gunners as tight as to tunic and as gruff as to voice as himself, he was ever the first to arrive at "practice," and many complaints had been heard in the barrack-room he inhabited on the score of his constantly conning over lines of hymns, and turns and twists of anthems, and practising "fancy bits" from under his cot rug in the still watches of the night.

The gunner's excuses ran thus: "I feel myself fair busting with music sometimes, and it must have its way somehow," but nobody was appeased, and insulting suggestions that he should go and "bust" in some other neighbourhood were freely offered. However, Grimes's day came at practice hour, and he made the most of his opportunities.

But to return. The doctor gave out the hymn, and read the first line,

Fierce raged the tempest o'er the deep,  
and straightway arose a din as of many  
bulls of Bashan giving tongue.

"You are not asked to represent the tempest, only to record it," said the doctor, beating the air with his hands to still the uproar, and looking aggrievedly at the open-mouthed assembly.

"They near give Gentleman Jack a blooming fit," said one band-boy to another, speaking in a fine, small whisper, and never changing a muscle of his face while he did so; to whom the other responded by "Now, ain't he that pertick'ler!" spitting the words out of the corner of lips that never stirred; and then the two presented the appearance of twin mutes at a funeral.

Meanwhile the hymn went on, less overpoweringly and aggressively this time, Gunner Grimes holding his men in check by the power of a glaring eye, and Alison's sweet soprano notes floating above the rest, like sunlight on water.

All went well for a time, when suddenly the doctor signalled a halt.

"Colour-Sergeant," he said, with one of his genial smiles, "we could do with a little more of your tenor, eh? Mr. Carbonel's absence—he is—ahem! somewhat uncertain in his attendance on these occasions—leaves us rather dependent—you must give us a little better measure." Every one looked straight at Gentleman Jack; indeed, the doctor could not very

well have meant the other Colour-Sergeant, since he was booming away like a bumble-bee in a sunflower. At the reference to Mr. Carbonel's absence, Mrs. Musters looked grave. She did not approve of these young subalterns marrying, and Fred Carbonel was the most recent and youngest of Lieutenants. The fact was, their wives—especially if at all good-looking—were apt to be uppish, and gave her a great deal of trouble.

As for Colour-Sergeant Smith, a red flush rose to the thick-set crescent of his dark, crisp hair. There could be no manner of doubt, he had been listening—not singing—listening with all his ears, with all his might, with all his soul, as we listen to the song of the lark that lifts us heavenwards. The doctor, thinking that perhaps he had spoken somewhat warmly, nodded reassuringly, and the hymn proceeded with evident improvement, the tenor being more to the fore. Later on the new chant was tried. It had a fall to the minor, in the second episode, that gave universal satisfaction, and the doctor went out when practice was over, humming the tune.

"I heard it in a parish where I was once—on furlough," said the Colour-Sergeant, and Mrs. Musters bowed her head in an amiable and condescending manner, as who should say: "Very proper—very suitable; you cannot do better, young man, than employ your furlough in looking after Church music; a most seemly pursuit."

As the two girls passed out of the chapel, a paper fell from Alison's book, and fluttered to the ground. In a moment the Sergeant had stooped down, restored it to its owner, and was holding back the door with a slight bow, which Alison, with a rather startled look, returned.

Then they set off home accompanied by Mr. Green and Verrinder, the former, in accordance with an obstinate persistency, laden with three hymn-books and a prayer-book.

"He's a wonderful good sort, isn't he?" said the latter, and every one understood he was speaking of the Colour-Sergeant. "Grand form, and all that sort of thing—eh?"

"By Jove!" chimed in Mr. Green, who occasionally clipped his words, "he's 'stroddinary fine fellow. When I had my little accident—er—bashed my nose a bit, you know—he took a lot of care of me; and I—I wanted to say, 'Thank you, old fellow!'—'pon my soul I did, you know."

"Still——" put in the Major's daughter, with an air as of one who understands the fitness of things in the service.

"Oh, quite—quite—quite," said Mr. Green hastily, catching her up before she could complete her sentence; "a fellow can't be led too much by his impulses—wouldn't do, you know. They'd bolt with him, chuck him over the fence, and all that sort of thing—land him sprawling—must keep the rein tight. That's what I always say to the—ahem—youngsters, you know."

The girls exchanged a furtive smile, and Mrs. Musters, labouring on in the rear, requested to know what Mr. Green was laying down the law about. No one, however, gave her any information, and Alison promptly, even hurriedly, introduced a new subject.

"Mr. Green," she said, her grave eyes looking reproachfully at that young warrior's rubicund countenance, "why do you and Mr. Verrinder come to choir practice? You know you can't sing, either of you, not one little bit. Indeed, you are quite useless, and you know it."

Mr. Green returned Alison's reproachful glance with interest.

"Useless!" he said. "Oh, Miss Drew, how can you?"

"Miss Drew is perfectly right," put in Mrs. Musters from behind. "It is a great mistake for people to undertake things they cannot do well."

Mr. Green thought of "Melancholy Jane," but dared not say a word.

As to Verrinder, never was a more entirely impenitent sinner seen. Nor was the offender without an advocate; for when the two girls were in the bright and cosy room they shared, the Major's daughter, stooping to untie a dainty shoe, accused her cousin of being "hard upon those two."

"You know they can't sing," replied Alison, much in earnest.

"Of course Mr. Green can't; but then he is a preposterous sort of person altogether. Mr. Verrinder is different; he can't sing much, I grant you, but I have distinctly heard three notes of his voice quite in tune—rather good notes, Alison."

The shoe-tie was troublesome, and had apparently become an intricate knot; and the little bit of the girl's face that was visible showed deeply red—with stooping, no doubt.

Alison looked gravely at her companion, and puckered up her mouth as if for a

whistle. If she had been Mr. Green, there can be no doubt she would have whistled long and loud.

Then she spoke of little Patsey, and how white and feeble he looked in his tiny box-bed.

"And Norah—did you chance to see Norah?"

"Only for a moment; she was on her way home. She has a strange, hunted look—a look that I don't like to see. She is like a landscape from which all the sunshine has died out."

"It is the memory of that day—that terrible day—she cannot forget. She is resentful against all the world."

"I wish—I wish," said Alison, clasping her hands tight, "that we did not lash our soldiers—treat them like dogs—worse than that, for the dog has the chance to run away! Surely such a cruel, degrading punishment ought to be kept for cruel and cowardly outrage, not used for such sins as poor Deacon was guilty of. Do you know what I heard the Colonel once say to Dad? I don't think I was meant to hear it, and yet I could not put it from my mind. He said: 'It is useful sometimes to hold it over them in terror; but I must say, for my own part, I wish it could be altogether a threatening terror and nothing more. Depend upon it, Henneker, those of us who live long enough will see the lash abolished altogether.'"

"Fancy you hearing that!" replied Elsie, who had now quite recovered her self-possession. "They don't care for us to hear them when they are talking 'shop,' though, do they, Alison?"

"No," said the other gravely; "and perhaps I ought not to have repeated this, even to you; but it seemed to me a promise of brighter things to come—for our soldiers—and you know any one who lives among soldiers must think of them, and care for them, and grow into touch with all their ideas and aims, and even with their faults and failings——"

A rippling light of laughter shone in Elsie's eyes.

"I do hope, my dear Alison, you will never marry out of the service; you will be a grand C.O.'s wife lost to the country if you do."

"See that you set me the example of taking the Queen's shilling, Miss Impertinence, and then, perhaps, I shall follow on—who knows?"

But to this the Major's daughter made no reply.

## STOCKHOLM.

## IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE skating seems to give the key-note to outdoor life in Stockholm in winter. People skate here, or seem to, as naturally as they eat, sleep, and walk.

Not that there are the same facilities for long-distance skating in Sweden as in Holland. In the latter industrious-land brooms and infinite energy are brought to bear upon the snow that tries to cover up the Hollander's beloved canals. Not so in Sweden. Resignation to the snow sets in in Scandinavia after November. Besides, Sweden is not permeated with waterways of the same kind as Holland's. The population, too, is smaller. It would not here, as in Holland, pay the tatterdemalions of the towns and villages to spend the hours of wintry daylight sweeping the snow from the frozen streams as fast as it falls. In Holland the average broom-man in December or January may hope in the evening to take home quite a weighty handful of copper coins. In Sweden the enterprising person who tried to work in this way would get his nose numbed, and find his patience exhausted, ere he earned the worth of a dinner. We are farther north here. Nature, too, is sterner. She sets brooms at defiance.

Lake Malar offers all conveniences for a series of magnificent open-air rinks in winter. These conveniences are accepted.

It was most exhilarating to join the varied throng, any evening after seven o'clock, on one of these spacious swept and garnished areas by the side of the central island. They were here in their thousands; men, and women, and children. And band-stands in the middle of the areas gave facility for the music so loved by the Stockholmers, and electric lamps were slung round and about the enclosures.

The moon and the keen northern stars did their best also to make the scene memorable, while on the outskirts of the rinks were booths as at a fair, in which, as in more southern resorts, you might get cups of coffee for a halfpenny, or shoot at blown eggs dancing on jets of water.

From the King downwards, every one skates. His Majesty has not a private rink. Oh, no! That is not the way in Sweden. For a popular monarch like King Oscar no other course is possible except to skate with his people; and he does it on the rink behind the Museum. There

are some charming maids of honour at the Swedish Court—ask Prince Oscar, who married the fair Ebba Munck, if it is not so—and His Majesty does not think it beneath him to take them by the hand to share and double his pleasure.

Some of the Swedes skate superbly. We do not in England see many of their champions at our precarious contests in the Fen country. Our frosts cannot be relied upon sufficiently to make it aught but hazardous for a Stockholmer to attempt the journey hither in search of ice-laurels. But I much mistake if they would not run either the Smarts of St. Ives, Hagen of Christiania, or the men of Friesland very close for pre-eminence if they gave themselves to the task. They are deft at figure-skating, too—contriving most of their work on the middle part of the skate, which is made slightly convex for the purpose.

Under such conditions of weather as may safely be predicted here in winter, it is natural that there should be rink rules just as there are moral rules of the pavement. Cigar-ends and dogs are, you learn from the notices, not to be endured on the ice. This is well. But the ordinary Swede, whether man or woman, boy or girl, can suffer some hard tumbles without complaining. Years ago in Sweden they had copper coins about ten inches square, and weighing six pounds avoirdupois—value two shillings and sixpence. A people who could appreciate nice little pieces of bullion of such a kind must have strong bones.

This prohibition of the presence of dogs on the ice is, however, suggestive. The Swedes are passionately fond of dogs. In the house where I lived there were four of them, from a gigantic nondescript to a toy terrier; and they all did pretty much as they pleased in the establishment. In the cafés, too, if you chance to fall agreeably asleep, you will also chance to be awakened sooner or later by the cold nose of a boarhound or a mastiff. The dear fellow is used to indiscriminate caresses and lumps of sugar, and he stands on no ceremony in his quest for both.

In time I should think they might breed dogs here of a size very valuable for their skins. Sweden is not such a land of game as some think it is, and so these omnipresent dogs cannot be for sporting purposes. Foxes, however, are still very plentiful. A hundred years ago, Acerbi the traveller told us how amused he was, between Stock-

holm and Grislehamn, "to see foxes here and there, standing or walking about on the highway without any apparent solicitude for their safety." Master Reynard is not hunted in state here as with us; but he is trapped, shot, and slain in any possible manner for the sake of the Government reward, and also for his pelt. In 1889, no fewer than thirteen thousand four hundred and forty-two foxes were registered as slain.

While I write I have before me the skin of one of these Swedish foxes. It is a beautiful thing in white and light brown. My host in Stockholm took me to the butcher's one day to choose it. I don't know, I'm sure, if any of Master Reynard's meat was on sale. Anyhow, there were several foxes' pelts, as well as stacks of reindeer skins, all frozen hard in the butcher's sheds. For a grand specimen of a reindeer skin I paid but five shillings and sixpence, while Master Reynard's natural blanket coat eight shillings. Between them the two things made a portly roll of fur. But ere getting them domiciled in England, I was considerably inconvenienced by the departure of the frost from their tissues. My luggage was not at all sweet latterly.

Bears are nearly extinct in Sweden. You may see them stuffed in the furriers' shops in Stockholm, and that is about all. In 1889 only nineteen were recorded as killed between Malmö and Haparanda.

The Swedish ladies deserve a paragraph. They are nothing less than delightful, and to the stranger—and I believe also to their husbands—seem to be possessed of every domestic virtue. They are as gentle in their manners as they are vigorous and capable physically. Unlike the Southerners, they do not loudly proclaim the points upon which they may reasonably consider that they excel. When beautiful—and some of them are divinely so—they bear their beauty almost apologetically, with a blushing modesty, indeed, that, if an art, is one of the most alluring of arts. An anecdote told by Miss Bremer about Jenny Lind is so characteristic on this score that it must be given.

"I asked Jenny," said Miss Bremer, "of what she thought on a certain night in the midst of her greatest success, and the simple reply was: 'I remembered that I had forgotten in the morning to sew a string on my cloak.'"

The same strain of simplicity appears in most Swedish ladies. They may be, as

many are, excellently cultured, but they seem prone to remember nothing less than their personal talents, achievements, or physical graces.

Nor can this be ascribed to their lack of common sensibility. They are anything but cold-natured. They feel very deeply, and are prone to high thinking. They are as romantic as their German cousins, and not infrequently as vivacious as a Frenchwoman. Withal, they seem exceptionally endowed with the common sense in which we Britons are supposed to excel.

I should suppose that no women make better wives or are more amenable daughters.

"Why," my host said to me one day when I had left his drawing-room to smoke a cigar with him, "do you not marry a Swedish wife? You will not want to change her. She will try to make you happy, and I think she will succeed."

For my part, I have little doubt she would succeed. The Swedish women have large feet—scoffers have brought it against them as if it were a dreadful misfortune—but they have hearts in keeping with the size of their feet. Perhaps—I cannot tell how that may be—but perhaps their hearts are almost too large for their bodies, though these, too, are large. Certainly I have, in their moments of repose, noticed an expression of placid melancholy on the faces of many of these ladies. It is sometimes a calamity to be of a very affectionate disposition. I could fancy that the Swedish wife might be embarrassing to an ordinary cold-blooded male.

But there, I am only jesting. To Hans Andersen's enthusiastic apostrophe of Sweden, "Thou land of deep feeling, of heartfelt songs! home of the limpid streams!" I would add an appendix, "and shrine of perfect women!"

Sweden has long held the chief place in Europe for its number of illegitimate births. From one aspect this casts a stigma upon the country; but from another point of view this vice might almost be rated as a virtue. In many respects the country people are ingenuous as they are not elsewhere. Nature is more powerful in them than the restraints of a high state of civilisation. This defect—we must assume that it is a defect—may be trusted to disappear in time. It is not now, for instance, the standing custom, as it was a few decades ago in Wermland, for a guest to kiss the waitress at the inn

when he had settled his bill and given her a more solid gratuity also.

It is always instructive to wander from the heart of a great city into its suburbs and so into the adjacent country, as yet unspoiled by builders. You can form an idea of the habits of a people much better by looking at these suburban houses than from the close-packed towers of Babel which form the business quarters of most European capitals.

Take our own metropolitan suburbs. The long streets of uniform small houses tell of the rage for snug privacy and absolute dominion which possesses our middle and working classes. Flats are not yet much loved by us.

It is otherwise at Stockholm. The buildings remote from the middle island, almost tickled, indeed, by the swart pines on the granite rocks which hug Stockholm on all its sides, are little less tall than our City edifices. They are not all comely; but the charge of flimsiness cannot be brought against them. Red brick and granite are most in favour as materials, and between them these do wonders. They say in Stockholm that their city is already the most beautiful in the world. It looks as if they mean it to be also the best built.

Some think a great deal of the colossal pile of iron in the heart of the city, which bears the burden of the myriad telephone wires which bind house to house and tongue to tongue. To my mind it is an ugly object. The stone building over which it rises with so considerable an air of menace is much better worth seeing. And herein you may find several score of smart young women earning their daily bread and chattering amazingly while they do the work of the Telephone Company.

It is, however, worth while to ascend this telephone tower if only to stare at a good deal of Stockholm beneath you. There is too much uniformity in the houses, but by no means too much in the level of the streets. From the north these latter run straight down to the water's edge of Lake Malar, or if not straight, with picturesque switchback undulations. There is a difference of two or three hundred feet between their level at one end and the other. This must be very objectionable for the horses that draw the tram-cars, and especially in winter, and for their sake it may be hoped that Swedish enterprise will soon substitute electricity for horse-power as a motor force.

I strolled north from the National

Museum one day when I had surfeited on prehistoric stone implements and—as it seemed—stone everything else. It was the dinner hour. For several minutes the streets were dense with clean-looking, brisk young women leaving their work. Then I passed a famous red church on a hill, in the churchyard of which a sexton was laboriously excavating a grave—they keep the ground fairly workable in winter with layers of dead leaves—and later the Observatory on a splendid site. Here the snow, which in the city was churned brown by traffic, began to assume its natural colour. I was touching the extreme limit of Stockholm in one direction. But the hammer and clink of mechanics resounded loud, and before me were the newest of Stockholm's new buildings. From them I walked directly into the forest, as sombre and yet fascinating a study in black and white as one could see. It was a little depressing to see that here, as in America, the primeval pines are not sacred from advertisers.

There is something noble about these monotonous features of Sweden. Wherever there is neither lake, river, cultivated field, nor set plantation, Nature seems determined to have pines, firs, or birches. The granite knolls among the trees add to their effect. But a builder could hardly find more intractable material than these environs of Stockholm. For the labouring classes of all kinds life in Sweden is a pretty severe test. After those who go down to the deep in ships, however, it must be harder for none than for those who have to transform irregular masses of tree-clad granite into "desirable residential blocks," five or six storeys high.

I would have walked on into the forest from Stockholm's outer edge had not the snow been too difficult. As it was, I had to content myself with a long look into the shadowy depths, and then return.

Falling suddenly ravenous—the Swedish air in winter is very appetising—I stepped into an ordinary working man's "breakfast-house," as it was styled on its sign. Here I regaled myself with a bottle of beer, two sandwiches of smoked salmon, and two sandwiches of cheese. The fact is not in itself remarkable, but the cheapness of the refectory seemed so to me. I paid five pence for the meal, and enjoyed the warmth of a stove, the daily paper, and the society of two very respectful old women into the bargain.

Thus comforted, I felt in train to hob-a-

nob with dead Kings and Queens and Royal Marshals, and so I hied me direct to the King's Palace, and sought and obtained a guide for the Royal burial-place in the Riddarholm—or "Knight's Island"—Church.

I need not describe my experiences here in detail; you can guess at them. My cicerone led me into a gorgeous modern chapel one minute, with staring marbles and gilding and elegant tombs in the midst thereof. A minute later he introduced me to the monuments of a different generation. Then we went down into dismal crypts packed with coffins in mouldering velvet covers, redolent of mortality. These faded chests of bones were all lavishly inscribed; and high by the clerestory windows of the almost disused old church hung banners of knights and war trophies, dusty, and still, and faded, like everything else in this sombre building.

It was a place to shiver in. The crowning touch came with a glance into a recess chamber in the west end of the church, where divers nameless dead lay in coffins higgledy-piggledy—the latter rudely decorated with inelegant representations of death's-heads. There were cobwebs in this pretty nook, but not much daylight. We know that it is not all "cakes and ale" to be a crowned King. It seems, however, one of the least precious of the privileges of a monarch—this prescriptive right to lie above ground for centuries, the mock of mean vermin, and an excitant of either pitying or contemptuous comments from the descendants of the subjects whom by courtesy they are said to rule.

The old Vikings went out of mortal existence with fine effect—at least, if the legends are to be believed. Probably in a few decades our great men will, as in the past, be consigned to funeral pyres when they have done their work. A worse thing might happen to them.

When I left the church I had the luck to clash with King Oscar himself in his Royal sledge, speeding towards his huge white Palace. His good people of Stockholm paid but little attention to him; but there was certainly no mistrust or antipathy in the looks that were directed towards him. If you can fancy it, it was as if the citizens were glancing at the head of their respective households, in whom they felt confidence, and whom they saw too often to suffer any agitation in seeing once again. Gustavus Vasa, whose tomb is perhaps

the best thing in the Riddarholm Church, was probably less happy in the full pride of his martial victories than Oscar the Second in the quiet love and confidence of his people. Oscar may well put up with the distrust and habitual opposition of the Norwegians, so he continues to be revered as he is by the Swedes.

Stockholm satisfies the visitor. One does not expect such lusty stir as one finds in it. Its beauty, on the other hand, answers expectation.

This is so even in winter. The weather during January and February is not a succession of keen bright days, without cloud. By no means. Occasionally the snow whirls hard and long about the streets, and tries to paint the telephone cables white. Lake Malar is then melancholy to behold, and may become deadly on closer acquaintance. The eye soon tires of falling snow, even as the body revolts against a too constant strife with this bitter northern wind. There seems no mercy, nothing, in fact, that is good in Nature at such times here. One goes to and fro in the city, furred to the eyebrows, and tries to find partial relief in execration of the storm.

In the country it is, of course, worse. While I was in Stockholm a hardy professor of Upsala—he taught English there—started to cross the fjelds and frozen lakes into Norway. It was a journey for snow-shoes. For a time all went well, but one day he separated from his guides for awhile, bent on what he thought might prove a short cut. For him, however, it proved a short cut not to Norway but to eternity. He trod on some rotten ice in a lake, and fell into the water. His snow-shoes, which had hitherto been an invaluable aid to him, now wrought his ruin. He could not extricate his feet. He hung on till his strength failed, then he gave up and died. There are more than the average of such chances of mortal calamity in Sweden in winter. The poets and painters of the North are true to nature in the sombre impressions their works leave, as a rule, upon the mind.

But what a rare stock of human beings must be the outcome of a brave fight with life under such conditions as prevail in the North! No wonder the Scandinavians do so well in America. They carry bold hearts as well as strong limbs with them to the West. These attributes are at least as important for the emigrant as subtle intellects.



Frithiof in the Saga said notable words when, in mighty consciousness of his own vigour, he demanded :

"What is high birth but strength!"

### A VOYAGE UP THE MEDWAY.

ABOVE the murmur of the waves sounds the voice, confused and indistinct but powerful enough, of the crowd, of the holiday crowd that is enjoying itself in its own hearty fashion on Southend Pier. Not a touch anywhere of the sadness that is said to characterise our pleasures, though there is room for sadness, too, if there were time to think about it. But the contingent of little cripples from their Home down east are the merriest of the crowd, and the destitute old women in poke bonnets and white caps, the uniform of their "Retreat," are positively brimming over with glee. There are numbers on the pleasure yachts that are rising and sinking with the swell, and though far from looking comfortable they are all chorusing "Daisy Bell" or some other popular strain. And how jovial we are as we sit in rows upon the benches, eating shrimps and peeling walnuts!

Even with those of us who have a more serious purpose in view than to "chase the happy hours away," and who are clustering about the gangway that is cleared for the steamer just coming alongside, the same cheerful spirit prevails. The artful boatmen try to tempt us from our purpose. "Who's for the yacht? Who's for the Nore Light, round the Nore Light? Try the Nore Light for a shillin'!" But we retort upon them with tales of maritime disasters, all couched in a light and cheerful vein. "What about the bilers busting?" suggests an old salt in the pleasure-boat interest, and a sudden explosive outburst from the steamer's waste-pipe, right in our ears, seems to emphasize the suggestion, while it frightens the picaninies and makes them scream in chorus. And this reveals what a number of babes and small children are contained in the crowd that is waiting for the Medway steamer. Not the sharp little London street urchins, but stout, stolid country babes, who put their fingers in their mouths and stare stolidly at strangers, or little maids who hide their rosy faces in their mothers' skirts when anybody speaks to them.

By this time the "Lady Nancy" has dis-

charged her living cargo of passengers, and we, the crowd, take a rush in the usual impetuous British manner, squeezing ourselves between massive timbers and storming the gangways like a forlorn hope, disregarding the temperate advice of the steamboat men to "take your time," and "don't all try to squeeze in at once." But nobody loses temper in the struggle except the babies, who, being accustomed to regard their mothers as fixed and stable institutions, are astonished to see them twirled round and round and carried along like straws in an eddy.

Once on board there is plenty of room for everybody, and as the living stream dwindles to a trickle, then to individual drops, and as the last drop fizzles along in the shape of a woman with a big carpet-bag and two children—no, there is another, and still another; but that one is left behind, for our captain has given the signal to cast off.

Probably, in these days of mechanical appliances, the ancient shouting, stentorian captain is getting a little scarce; but you could hardly expect to meet with any one quite so quiet as our captain. He has to look up at the ship's boy, but were Goliath in his place he could not make that youth jump about more smartly. And he commands that boat—and she is a pretty big one—with a wink of the eye, sometimes aided by a twitch of the thumb. But he is not dumb, as poor Harry finds, who has clambered up on a forbidden part of the bridge and is airily swinging his legs above the crowd.

"Git dan," says the captain, catching sight of him.

"Git down? Oh, I'll git down," said Harry, with a sarcastic intonation, as the captain took a turn across the deck.

"Not dan yet!" sings out the captain, in a voice like the cocking of a pistol.

"I'm just coming down, captain," explains Harry meekly, and down he slides and joins the general company. Harry tells the story over and over again, with the comment: "We don't always know how to reckon 'em up; but I call that a fast-rate officer."

Well, we are fairly afloat and crossing the great tideway, where big steamers slide to and fro, and all kinds of craft are reaching and tacking, on various errands bent, but mostly with tributary burdens for London town; and the white forts of Sheerness show more and more plainly, and the Medway opens out, and we are among a little fleet of white spick-and-

span gunboats, where bluejackets lean over the nettings and survey us calmly with observant eyes; and there is a big ironclad clustered round with barges and a hulk or two, and with a little cloud of coal-dust about her. And then we are nearly run down by a launch full of gold-banded officers, a danger which our captain averts with a combined wink and jerk of the thumb.

And at Sheerness Pier we bid adieu to the most part of the holiday crowd, and we who are left are of a more solid, serious capacity. We form family groups, we spread ourselves out on camp-stools, and bring our binoculars to bear on passing objects. On the other side is Port Victoria, which is just a railway pier set out on a low marshy coast. Its inhabitants live in railway carriages, and devote their time to cleaning the windows of their temporary habitations, and polishing up things in general. But once or twice a day the place wakes up into sudden life, as big steamers land or embark their passengers, and every now and then the place is festooned with flags, and cocked hats abound, and soldiers present arms, as Highnesses, Imperial, Royal, or Serene, arrive or depart. And now we are among the coal hulks, and looming black upon us is the old "Benbow," her toothless old ports all grimy with coal-dust, and grimy figures look out from the Admiral's state-cabin, and wave a friendly greeting to my "Lady Nancy."

And now we are in quarantine, where big cattle boats are laid up, clanking their chains and tugging at their moorings, and in the midst of the river a many-sided white fort, with guns peeping queerly through the little glass casements that are now open to admit what breeze may blow into the close and heated quarters, while one or two blue-coated artillerymen have come up for air to the top, which must be baking hot too in the sunshine. There is a string of these white casemated forts, built on shoals and islets in the river, imposing in appearance, but not of much defensive value.

When the Dutch came up this way in their famous raid on the Medway, the Royal gunners complained that His Majesty's forts offered more danger than defence, and that the enemy's big shot knocked the rotten ramparts about their ears in a lamentable manner. And these white casemated forts have very much the air of whitened sepulchres, and would probably soon be

laid in ruins by the fire of the powerful artillery of the present day. But perhaps they are not meant for serious defence, but like the wooden guns on Chinese forts to fright the enemy away—and they certainly inspire respectful awe in the passengers of the "Lady Nancy."

"Two inches more to the right, my love, and you will have the shade of the funnel. There! with the brown rug at your back, and the crimson one over your feet, and the Shetland round your shoulders. Now! do you find yourself quite comfortable?"

"And the box to put my feet on, you have forgotten that, D.A.P.," says the dame, rather sharply.

She is handsome still, although her hair is silver-white, and a contrast to the D.A.P., who is black and grizzled as if he had been scorched by gunpowder. A sailor man was humming just now a stave of the old chanty:

"Two ships of war came from afar,  
From Edward, England's King;  
'Go fetch,' he said, 'alive or dead,  
The pirate captain King."

Now the D.A.P. would have made an admirable representative of the pirate captain, but he has never been anything of the kind. The D.A.P.B. R.N., which is inscribed on all his belongings, is to be interpreted as Deputy-Assistant Paymaster, "Blossom," Royal Navy. Still one can't help associating a romantic career with the glowing eyes and resolute countenance. Perhaps he ran away with the Port Admiral's daughter, long, long ago; and this may account for the devotion with which he still regards her. He has a little basket of dainties to tempt her with—a lovely ripe William pear, a sponge-cake, a packet of fondants, and a very tiny flask. He is quite happy when she chooses a pear, and produces a little case full of implements, amongst which is a silver-bladed pocket-knife, with a mother-of-pearl handle. Ah! that silver-bladed knife brings in the touch of sadness to our pleasure, with the thought of the old walled garden, fragrant with herbs and flowers, and with the scent of the ruddy peaches and golden nectarines, and of the dainty fingers that held another silver-bladed knife.

Meantime the D.A.P. has peeled the pear, but the Port Admiral's daughter has changed her mind, and will have a sponge-cake instead, and the pirate king munches the pear himself; with a twinkle in his eyes as if he had not had the worst of the bargain.

Oh, it is a pleasant, lazy passage, as the green shores flit by, and the full, placid tide reflects the church spire and the wind-mill on the hill, and the tufted trees and the red and white cows; or takes a twirl, and serves up a broken image of some great black ironclad; or glows in the shadow of the great red flapping sail of the "Mary Anne," of Rochester.

And how delightful to sit with your back to it all, and discuss with some village crony the price of butcher's meat, and the ways of infants with their teeth. The "aliquid amari" in this case is the behaviour of little Wilfred, who, seated astride the bitts, with the water flashing past in dangerous proximity to his chubby little legs, is shouting and laughing, and lashing the deck with a stick in the perverted ingenuity of childish imagination, which sees a cock-horse in a big packet-boat, with its hundreds of horse-power engines and machinery, all saddled and bridled for our especial use.

And the entrancing gossip is broken off, between the briкет and the chine as it were.

"Wilfred, you come upstairs to mother directly."

"Shan't."

"Wilfred, I shall speak to the cap'n about you," significantly.

Wilfred throws a glance aloft.

The captain has retreated to an inaccessible part of the bridge, and hung himself up by the elbows to the railings. His face is as impassible as that of one of the Indian gods at the British Museum. But when you see a brawny sailor dart forward and haul furiously at something, you may guess that the captain has winked; and when all the crew are seen suddenly flying in all directions to haul or let go, it may be presumed that the captain has jerked his thumb. Now whether a corner of the captain's eye rested on Wilfred for a moment it is impossible to say; but anyhow, Wilfred crawled meekly up the poop ladder, and sat down and listened to the discussion on the briquet and chine for at least three minutes. At the end of that time, it must in justice to Wilfred be said, that he was to be found once more upon the bitts and lashing his literally foaming steed. And then the captain winked again, and a sailor man placed a substantial bulwark between the child and the rushing tide. Decidedly, that captain is human.

But we have passed the Isle of Grain and Chitney Marsh, with inlets, and wide channels, and islands crowned with forts;

we have rounded Oakham Ness, and made the island called Bishop's Marsh, that in connection with the Isle of Grain should suggest a wicked Bishop devoured by rats, whose story has got misplaced to some castle on the Rhine. And here is Gillingham Point, and the big crane that marks the entrance to the great dockyard basin, masked by the pleasant verdant isle that has risen out of the slime and sludge of a marshy shoal, as a result of the unrelenting labours of—

"Convicts! that's your sort!" and there is a general rush of the London visitors to see the convicts. "Chain 'em together, don't they?" "All of a row with rings round their necks, and a peeler holding the end." As it happens, convicts at Chatham are like snakes in Iceland, a vanished quantity. They have finished their work and retired to other "parages." Certainly there are none to be seen. "They are all gone to dinner," suggests one. "Dinner! what does they git for dinner?" asks another. A serious man relates how he was once on a jury, and sentenced a man to penal servitude. And he wonders if he's there now. "'Aving his dinner, gov'nor, an' don't you wish you wos?" is suggested by a jolly little man, who has the laugh on his side, for certainly the jurymen has a lean and hungry look, and the sea and river voyage has sharpened everybody's appetite.

Somebody must have winked just then, for the ship had stopped, and is backing up to a little wooden pier that rides jauntily on the waves. It is Upnor, upper or lower, but a charming little place where everybody is making holiday. There is a hill thrice as high as Greenwich, to run up or down, a really imposing crest, and bosky thickets and tufted tumuli on the heights. Civilisation, perhaps, has retreated a little as those ancient chiefs have slept so calmly in their grave mounds. There were flourishing communities where are now only salt marshes, and famous potteries that supplied all Britain with crocks and pots, such as the bargeman pulls up with his anchor every now and then.

And under the hill lies the quaint, turreted, Elizabethan castle of Upnor, that the Dutchmen "regarded no more than a fly."

And now the dockyard is passed visible dockyard, for the steam barge behind the high green bank are only outlined in funnels and cranes, and peaked ridges of sheds. But here are the

red brick store-houses, and the snug dock-yard dwellings of snug officials, in the warm Hanoverian pattern, and we hear the crash of the Royal Marine band, and bayonets glitter here and there; and there are the shiny, slaty roofs of Chatham perched up and down the hill with barracks, forts, and factories all jumbled together, and green earthworks and red forts smiling or grinning above. And what a fleet of pleasure-boats all dancing in the water, and how the Captain Superintendent's gig sweeps along with the sturdy bluejackets bending their backs to the stroke, and here is Chatham Pier, a great stage of timber, where rows of people are waiting to welcome their friends. Adieu, captain! He seems to divine our thoughts, and with a disengaged thumb he points towards the hill—"Station." Adieu, pirate chief! Wilfred has gone off on his grandfather's shoulders without a look in our direction. Port Admiral's daughter, we salute you. No more of our pleasant sunny voyage.

## A TRUE STORY OF AN IRISH COURTSHIP.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

#### I.

IN the suburbs of the beautiful city of Cork, within a short distance of "the pleasant waters of the river Lee," stood Vernon Mount, the residence of Sir Henry Hayes. Sir Henry, like most Irish gentlemen of the time, was dashing, reckless, and improvident; consequently he was generally popular and frequently impecunious.

Seated at breakfast one morning with his sister, the knight's brow was unusually cloudy; a circumstance that did not escape the lady's observant eyes.

"What's the matter now?" she asked.

"Have you got into any fresh scrape?"

"It's the same old story," he answered gloomily; "no cash—no credit—ruin not far ahead."

"Why don't you retrieve the fortunes of the family by marrying an heiress? It's a sure and easy way out of difficulty."

"Heiress, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Henry. "Where is she? You can't gather heiresses on the hedges like blackberries in a Kerry lane."

"No," returned his sister quietly, "but they can be found, though, and not so far off either. There's Miss Pike, for instance."

"Miss Pike!" He laughed contemptuously.

"Why, I have never seen her, and don't know that I shall ever set eyes on her."

"Bah!" said the lady scornfully. "If I were a man I should soon speak to any woman I had a mind to."

"But Miss Pike is a prim little Quaker, and would be horrified at the bare suggestion of marrying such a harum-scarum, devil-may-care fellow as I am known to be."

"Henry," said his sister, with severity, "I'm ashamed of you! How many of your countrymen have carried off their brides with a strong hand, and married them willy nilly? I begin to doubt whether you have any of the old Hayes blood left in your veins."

"Don't despair, Jane," returned the knight, with an evil gleam in his eyes; "you're a good sister, and I'll try to benefit by your wisdom. Since the days of mother Eve a woman has been at the bottom of all mischief."

Miss Hayes did not reply to this sarcasm; and the meal terminated in silence.

#### II.

MR. COOPER PENROSE, a gentleman well known and much respected in society, lived in a charming country house not far from Cork. Miss Mary Pike, the only daughter and heiress of his dead friend, Samuel Pike, had been entrusted to his guardianship, and he cared for her with the affection of a father. Miss Pike was a young lady upon whose education no expense had been spared. Delicately and tenderly nurtured, she was unusually accomplished; and in addition she possessed the modesty and reserve characteristic of the sect to which her family belonged. Altogether, a more attractive young lady could hardly be found even among the fascinating daughters of Erin.

The residence of Mr. Penrose was built in a very picturesque situation. It was, indeed, one of the sights of the neighbourhood which strangers frequently came to see. One fine summer day an unknown gentleman rode up the avenue, and seemed to observe everything with attentive curiosity. With true Irish hospitality Mr. Penrose immediately went out, and conducted him over the place. The stranger was much entertained; lingered about the grounds admiring and praising everything; and, finally, as the hour of dinner approached, received an invitation to that meal. Mr. Penrose was naturally reluctant

to introduce an unknown stranger to his family; but the hospitable feelings of an Irish gentleman prevailed over his scruples. Sir Henry Hayes—for it was he—was received with much kindness and cordiality, and made the acquaintance of the fair and unsuspecting maiden against whom he harboured such fell designs. In fact, he had come solely for the purpose of enabling him to identify her when his plans were fully matured.

### III.

"WELL!" said Miss Hayes, next morning.

"Well," returned her worthy brother, "I have seen the heiress. But we are no nearer the goal than before. She is too well guarded. It would take a regiment of soldiers and a park of artillery to storm your mansion."

"Indeed!" said the lady sardonically. "It seems to me the better plan would be to let the girl come out to you of her own free will."

"Very true indeed—but how is it to be done?"

"That's for you to find out. I'm not wanting to marry Mary Pike. However, I suppose I must stimulate your sluggish invention. Do you know that her mother is very ill in Cork?"

"So I have heard—but what has that to do with it?"

"And her medical attendant is Doctor Gibbings," pursued the lady, unmindful of his question.

"Well, what then?" said her brother, not perceiving her drift.

"How dull you are this morning, Henry!" Miss Hayes continued. "Could not Dr. Gibbings ask Mary to come into Cork some night to see her mother?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the knight. "In the first place, I don't know Dr. Gibbings; and, in the second place, he wouldn't join in any plot of the kind."

"Pshaw!" answered Miss Hayes. "You are dense to-day, Henry—perfectly stupid, in fact—so I am compelled to speak plainly. Write to Dr. Gibbings for a prescription for the gout—you're sure to need it sooner or later. You can thus get a sample of the doctor's handwriting—and the rest is easy to a man of your spirit and resource."

### IV.

LATE one dark July night, a few days after the interview recorded above, Mr. Penrose's household was awakened by a violent knocking at the outer door. A

messenger had come in hot haste from Cork with a letter, which he delivered, and then vanished in the gloom. The letter was superscribed "To Mr. Cooper Penrose," and the handwriting was that of Dr. Gibbings. It ran thus:

"DEAR SIR,—Our friend, Mrs. Pike, is taken suddenly ill; she wishes to see Miss Pike. We would recommend despatch, as we think she has not many hours to live.—Yours, ROBERT GIBBINGS."

Instantly Miss Pike arose from her bed, and made haste to depart, fearful that the worst might happen to her mother before she could arrive. The carriage was promptly brought to the door; Miss Pike, Miss Penrose, and another lady got into it; and about two in the morning they all set out on their sad journey, little dreaming how sad it was to be. The night was pitch dark; the rain fell in torrents; and as the coach ploughed through the miry road it was suddenly met by four or five armed men, who called upon the coachman to stop.

Naturally the ladies were terrified almost out of their wits by this rencontre. As soon as their terror would permit they asked:

"What do you want?"

At this one of the men, disguised in a long great-coat and with a handkerchief tied over his face, advanced and answered:

"You must be searched."

The carriage door was thrown open. By the dim light of a dark lantern its occupants could be seen shrinking back in fear and alarm. The leader pointed out Miss Pike, and despite the poor girl's protests, entreaties, and tears, she was torn forcibly from her friends and placed in a chaise which stood by. As the chaise drove off she sank back exhausted, and found—a lady by her side.

"Oh, save me! save me!" cried Miss Pike, convulsively clinging to her companion.

"Hush!" said the stranger sternly, though not unkindly. "We mean you no harm. But you must be quiet."

The young lady's entreaties proved futile. There was, indeed, no help to be had from the iron woman at her side; so the chaise drove on to Vernon Mount. At the bottom of the long and steep avenue the horses stopped, being unable to drag the vehicle further over the heavy road. Hereupon Sir Henry Hayes rode up, dismounted, took the struggling girl in his

arms, and in spite of her strenuous resistance carried her up to his house. When they entered, a person attired like a clergyman came forward; some sort of ceremony was gone through; words were muttered in a language which the half-fainting victim either did not hear or did not understand, and at the close she was informed that she was Lady Hayes!

"Now," said Sir Henry, putting a pen into her hand, "you had better inform your friends of your wedding without delay."

In the wild hope of obtaining deliverance she wrote what they suggested; but neither persuasion nor threats could induce her to sign the letter by the odious name of her captor. And now, in the last extreme, modesty gave the unhappy creature unexpected courage and strength. This fine example of knighthood could not succeed in overcoming her scruples even by force, so he resorted to blandishment and conciliation. He expostulated, he pleaded.

"Don't you know me? I am your friend, your husband."

"Yes," she answered, "I do know you now. I remember your intrusion at my cousin's. But you are not my husband; and, Heaven helping me, you never shall be."

And so, strong in her innocence and purity, Mary Pike remained a captive under the roof of Sir Henry Hayes.

#### V.

MEANTIME the friends of Miss Pike were not idle. Enquiries were prosecuted on all sides, and at length the place of her captivity was discovered. Armed with the authority of the law for the recovery of the lady, a party proceeded to Vernon Mount with all speed. They found Miss Pike not so much the worse for her adventure as might have been expected, and greatly rejoiced to be restored to her relations. But the bold knight and his amiable sister had disappeared, leaving no trace of their whereabouts; and not without very good reason, for the crime of abduction was then punishable by death.

Informations were immediately lodged in a court of justice, the usual legal machinery was put in motion, and a large reward was offered for the arrest of the principal culprit. However, as he remained in concealment, the process of law went on in his absence, and at length sentence of outlawry was passed upon him in due form by the Court.

Now comes the most curious part of this singular story—a part that throws a lurid light upon the state of Irish society so late as the beginning of the present century. The practice of abducting young and marriageable girls of fortune had been prevalent in Ireland for a long time, and was looked upon with approval by a large section of the Irish public. During the whole of the eighteenth century it was no uncommon occurrence for some predatory Irish "gentleman," accompanied by his retainers, to swoop down upon an unsuspecting household, and carry off a helpless maiden. True, the unfortunate girl frequently—perhaps generally—became the wife of the man who had captured her by his bow and by his spear. Marriage, however, with these barbarians, and under such conditions, was often a worse fate than perpetual spinsterhood. According to various authorities, "abduction clubs" flourished even in the city of Dublin itself. Bankrupts, spendthrifts, and blackguards banded themselves together, and drew lots for eligible girls; and the abductor usually placed the lady before him on horseback in order to plead, with a touch of Irish humour, that she had abducted him!

To mend this scandalous state of matters, a law was enacted making the crime of abduction a capital offence; but the law was practically inoperative while it ran counter to public opinion. Twenty years before the date of the present narrative, two sisters named Kennedy had been carried off by force in open day. A prosecution was instituted against their captors, and the young women with reluctant modesty consented to appear as witnesses. Every means, however, was used to deter them from coming forward. Popular feeling ran so high that it was actually necessary to guard them through two counties with a detachment of military as they went to prosecute; and it was hailed by the decent section of Irish society as a remarkable triumph of justice when the offenders were found guilty and hung.

In such circumstances it was not, perhaps, surprising that Sir Henry Hayes could not be made amenable. He was a well-known man, he was a criminal, he had incurred the pains and penalties of outlawry, rewards amounting to near one thousand pounds had been offered for his apprehension; yet he walked about openly in the streets of Cork among his friends and acquaintances, enjoying himself to the top of his bent at balls and festivals

and races, like a fine old Irish gentleman all of the olden time. Not only so, but the hapless young lady, whose life he had rendered miserable by his villainy, was forced for her personal safety to take refuge in England, away from her family and her home!

# VI.

TWO years elapsed. The gallant knight's sister and accomplice was now dead, and he himself desirous of bringing "the Pike affair" to a conclusion—possibly owing to the depleted state of his exchequer. At all events, he wrote a letter to Miss Pike, half-appealing, half-threatening. The poor, persecuted man stated that his conduct had been honourable and delicate throughout; that no lady with a spark of humanity in her bosom could thirst for his blood; that, if she did indulge in such an unlady-like thirst, it would be worse for her; and that he was willing to abide his trial in the city of Cork, where, he thanked Heaven, he stood as high as any man in the regards of rich and poor.

So this pious honourable, and eminently delicate knight at last appeared in Court. The sentence of outlawry was reversed without opposition, as the prosecutors wished the trial to take place on the original charge of abduction. A motion for change of venue on the ground of the prisoner's popularity in Cork was made by counsel for the prosecution; but the judges dismissed it, stating that they believed a Cork jury would remember what they owed to their oaths, to their families, and to their country, and would do their duty without fear, favour, or affection.

The friends of Miss Pike spared no expense to secure a conviction. Curran, then at the zenith of his fame, was brought down "special" to Cork to prosecute. Besides being the most brilliant advocate that the Irish bar ever produced, he was the darling of his countrymen; and to do him justice, few men better deserved their affection. As he passed into the Court-house, an old fishwoman, who had known him in earlier days, saluted him with:

"Hooray, Counsellor dear! I hope you'll gain the day!"

"Take care what you say, my good woman," answered the Counsellor, smiling, "for if I gain the day, you'll certainly lose the (k)night!"

Curran was more used to the defence of prisoners than to their prosecution. But in the present case he produced a profound effect by a speech at once luminous, elo-

quent, and pathetic, worthy to rank among the best orations that even he had ever delivered.

The evidence and the eloquence were alike overwhelming. The jury, much to Sir Henry's surprise and horror, brought in a verdict of guilty; and the prisoner was sentenced to death. Consternation fell upon his friends at this unexpected result. Was it possible that a real Irish gentleman should suffer the fate of a vulgar Croppy for such an amiable weakness? The thing was absurd, outrageous, incredible. Sir Henry's friends set to work, and made strenuous efforts on his behalf. Owing to their exertions, Sir Henry Hayes—like that other eminently moral knight, Sir John Falstaff—remained unhung, the sentence of death being commuted into one of transportation for life.

Time ran on. After passing some years in banishment, Sir Henry got his sad case brought to the notice of the Prince Regent, who obtained a pardon for the delinquent, and Sir Henry was restored to that select circle which had so long mourned his loss.

But when he returned to his native land times had changed; a death-blow had been given to the abduction of young girls; a more enlightened public sentiment was gradually growing up in Ireland; and—to adapt the lines of Mrs. Hemans:

His banner led the spears no more  
Among the hills of Cork.

# LUCK.

IT is the successful man who is apt to express the strongest disbelief in luck. "There is no such thing as luck," he tells you. "A man makes good use of his opportunities, and they call him lucky." But he forgets to add that some men never seem to have opportunities of which they can make good use. This is a world of inconsistencies. There is a man of my acquaintance who, though still in the early prime of his life, has made a large fortune on the Stock Exchange, and he protests, with might and with main, that he does not owe his fortune to his luck, but to his judgement. So, in a sense, it may be. There undoubtedly are men who, if they had been placed in his position, would still have contrived to make a mess of things. Still, the fact remains that he had the good luck to be on the Stock Exchange when money was to be made by clever men, and, sometimes, even by fools. He himself

owns that if he had continued on the Stock Exchange until to-day he might have lost all he had made. But he cut the game in time—and that again, he adds with a triumphant grin, was evidence, not of his good luck, but of his judgement. No doubt his judgement did have something to do even with that; but still, I maintain, his luck had more. He went into the "house" as a young man, when things were booming, and he made all his money in six or seven years. Suppose he had been going in just when, as a matter of fact, he was coming out, would he then have made his money in six or seven years? I doubt it, and so, in his heart of hearts, does he. Not though he had exercised all the judgement in the world.

Life is a more complicated problem than anything which is to be found in Euclid, and one to which, when all is said and done, no man has the key. The strangest things do happen. A strives for a thing with might and main, and never gets it; while exactly that thing comes to B without his even having lifted a finger. One has only to move to and fro over the face of the earth to find that the thing which we call luck is everywhere. "It is not in mortals to command success; but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it." Capital morality, for the school-room, where they are apt to teach morality even at the expense of truth. But experience teaches us that it is better to be a lucky than a deserving man. "I make it a rule never to have dealings with unlucky men"—we have seen the saying attributed to a member of a Rothschild family, and to Benjamin Disraeli. Whoever did say it was a wise man if he acted up to it. It is good policy to leave the sinking ship. It is equally the part of wisdom to attach oneself to the rising sun.

On the other hand, such a line of conduct is not without its drawbacks. Bad luck, like good luck, has a trick of coming in slices. Before you know it, the unlucky man, whom you have been carefully avoiding, all in a moment may become the luckiest man alive, and that owing to circumstances which the most far-seeing judgement could never have foreseen. There is, at this moment, a member of the peerage whom, during the last few years, one has often heard spoken of as the luckiest man in England. When he was a young man, several lives stood between him and his present position—good lives, in the insurance office sense—he was

ignored by the elder branch of the family, was in receipt of a scanty income, with, practically, no prospects for the future. Almost with the rapidity of a transformation scene at a theatre, the scene was changed. The Destroying Angel insisted on all the members of that elder branch "handing in their checks." The present man found the ball of fortune at his feet—certainly owing to no special desert of his own.

In one of the home counties a young man lives in a fine house in the centre of a fine estate. When that young man was a still younger man, he was an all-round bad lot—a drunkard, and a gambler. His family sent him to Australia for the good of his health—and theirs. He went wrong there as he went wrong here. He was gambling one night with some other impecunious vagabonds who had, practically, nothing to lose but what they stood up in. He won from one of them a bundle of papers. These papers were shares in a certain gold-mine, so called. The shares were so wholly valueless that the young man, disdaining, even in his state of penury, to keep such rubbish, threw them on to the fire. Repenting, however, of his act, he snatched them back again, when they had already been scorched by the flames. Shortly afterwards, the man who had lost those shares died in a fit of delirium tremens. The day he died, by the purest accident, a workman in the mine struck upon a paying lode. Speculators will tell you that the history of that mine has since been one of the most surprising in mining annals—a history of unvarying success. That young gambler, who had never even taken the trouble to examine his winnings, discovered, to his amazement, that he held a commanding share. He holds it still. He has already realised a large fortune, and he continues to receive what to some folks would be a large fortune, every year. He has returned to England, he has bought that house and that estate, and there he lives in style, spending his money quite in the good old way. If his was not a case of luck, what was it?

Take the reverse of the picture. I am personally acquainted with a case of such continuous, and, as it seems to me, such undeserved ill luck, that, when I tell you the tale, you will, perhaps, deem the thing incredible. But it is true, every word of it.

A friend of mine had a youngster, whose



goal was a commission in the army. He was one of the most promising youngsters I ever knew. He went through school with all-round honours. He passed from College high on the list of those entitled to commissions. On undergoing his final medical examination as to physical fitness, it was discovered that, since his entering College, a relation had died of consumption. He stood over six feet in his socks; his physique was in every way worthy of his inches; he had scarcely had an hour's illness in his life. But he was ploughed—because of the relation who had died. He appealed, you may be sure; but his appeal was disallowed. In the first frenzy of his disappointment he enlisted in the ranks. The doctors passed him that time! He had not been a cavalry-man six months before a horse in the stables savaged him so badly that the authorities, concluding that the task of healing him might not be worth the candle, "retired" him. It was a long time before he was himself again; but, when he was himself, at his own request, his father gave him a sum of money and his passage out to the States. On the way out his money was stolen—it was never known by whom. Practically penniless, he landed in New York. Soon he was conducting a tram-car. In an argument with an intoxicated "tough," who objected to pay his fare, he slipped off the platform of his car, and stumbled in the street. A cart passed over him. He was in a hospital when he came to. His father sent him money to enable him to return. He returned. Back in England, his father set him up as a market-gardener. Probably he was not a master of his trade, and his first two seasons were two of the most disastrous which have ever afflicted the British market-gardener. At the end of them he was penniless, and worse. Declining to come again upon his father, who was not by any means a wealthy man, he worked his own way out to the Western States of America. There he became a cowboy. His first winter was one of the hardest winters on record—that is saying a good deal in that part of the world. In the course of it both of his feet were frost-bitten. They had to be amputated above the ankles. Now he is back again in England, scarcely over thirty, a lifelong cripple, with a shattered constitution, and, to all intents and purposes, not a hope left in the world. Again, if his was not a case of luck, what was it?

If we want a thing, by all means let us

try to get it; but it does not follow that we shall get it because we try. The doctrine of "Self-Help" is, no doubt, a convenient one. Unfortunately, it is not sound. Men have gained things which they have struggled to gain—a small minority. The large majority have wholly failed. You say that their failure has, probably, been a good deal owing to themselves. But do you not think that the element of luck enters into the constitution of a man? A has had the good luck to be born with, deeply engrained in him somewhere, the capacity to achieve success, while B has the bad luck to be born with a trend towards failure. We did not make ourselves—we are made. After all, it was only an accident that Lord Tennyson was a great poet, and that Martin Tupper was a little one. Not by taking any amount of thought could Martin Tupper have been Lord Tennyson. Possibly, though he had tried his hardest, Lord Tennyson could not have been a Martin Tupper. It was purely a question of luck: one was Tennyson, the other was Tupper.

It has been said, many a time, that "Self-Help" has done a great deal of good. It may be questioned whether a book—any book—ever did much good, or, for the matter of that, much evil. I, for one, doubt if books have anything like the influence upon the lives of those who read them, which the common and irresponsible conversation of the world supposes. Be that as it may, it would seem to be beyond all doubt that, if "Self-Help" has done anything, it has done at least as much evil as good. It has filled a number of unreflecting persons with the belief that they can be exactly what they please. There is nothing more common than for people to mistake the desire to be, for the power to be. Probably "Self-Help" has done as much as any book to foster this mistake. Many who read Mr. Smiles's book jump to the conclusion that his heroes owed all their successes to themselves—to their capacity, that is, for self-help. These readers say, what these men did, we can do. If it is only a question of perseverance, of "dogged does it," we can persevere with any one. They do persevere, and continue failures to the end.

If you read between the lines of Mr. Smiles's book—and what is being said of this particular work applies equally to the multitude of others of which it is a type—you will perceive that his, so-called, self-

made men, as a matter of fact, owed very little to themselves. Their success was as much the result of a fortuitous combination of circumstances as of anything. To begin with, they were all of them remarkable men—that in itself is an accident which does not occur to all of us. A great man is a great man, and a man of four foot six shall never attain to six foot four. Moreover, you will find that most of them were what are nowadays called “cranks”—men of one idea. They were almost invariably reduced, by their own actions, to the direst straits, and then, in the very nick of time, they struck oil, just as they were starving. Success was their only justification. If they had failed they would have borne a suspicious resemblance to criminals. Arkwright, Palissy, a whole list of them, were guilty of conduct which, if it had not been crowned by ultimate success, could scarcely have been defended by any code of morality with which I am acquainted. If a man neglects his business, allows his wife and family to nearly starve in the effort to keep him and themselves, while he sells his all, and their all, to provide himself with the means of making models, when, as generally is the case, the models turn out in the end to be absolutely worthless, do we not, at the very least, say to that man: “Go to, thou fool!” If a man “breaks up his home,” not once, nor twice, but over and over again, to feed his furnaces with the family goods and chattels, when, as they nearly always do do, his experiments ultimately result in failure, are our sympathies with the man, or with the helpless victims of his frenzy? We guessed from the first that he was some sort of a lunatic; at the last, he has proved it to our completest satisfaction. No doubt there are men walking about to-day, who have done exactly what Arkwright and Palissy did, and who, as a natural and practically inevitable consequence, have found themselves in jail. Mr. Smiles’s heroes had the luck upon their side; these other men had the luck against them. Enthusiastic worshippers of the shining god, Success, may put it as they please. That is how it appears to me.

I am not advising any one not to do his best—quite the contrary. I am simply stating what I hold is a self-evident truth, that though one does one’s best, it does not follow that one will succeed, because every day of every man’s life the element of luck comes in. How do you suppose a successful book is pro-

duced? By taking thought, or its equivalent, pains? I doubt it. I do know that success in literature is apt to be achieved by something very like a fluke, and that a man constantly—I do not say invariably, but constantly—does his best work when he is taking least pains. Take an artist: he chances—observe the word!—to hit upon a good idea; the picture in which he gives it expression achieves a world-wide fame. Other men, more than his artistic peers, never chance upon a good idea, and, therefore, never attain to a tithe of his fame. Do you think that there is no such thing as luck in the Army, and the Navy; that there have never been commanders who have won battles which, had it not been for some lucky chance, they would have lost? You know very little about the matter if you do.

At the same time, the man who habitually relies upon his luck, and upon his luck only, if he lights upon evil days, as he is tolerably certain to do, deserves all that he gets, and more. There is something in the Mahomedan’s theology—“Kismet! It is to be!” And because there is something in it, the really strong man is he who, fully recognising that the arbitrament in no way depends upon his efforts, still fights on. Understand this clearly, the joy is not in the prize, but in the running of the race. Do your best. If luck is against you, why, do it still. Work for the work’s sake. Strive for the sake of the strife. Luck is against most of us, it is certain; what then? Between the lucky and the unlucky man there is not so great a gulf as many think; between success and failure there is often but little to choose.

Also let us remember, though we may not be what the world calls lucky—that is, successful—we most of us do have some share of good luck. Many of us have the luck to be healthy. I wonder how many are conscious how much luck has to do with health. Fortune can endow us with no richer gift. It may almost be said that, if you have not good health, you have nothing. In spite of all the boasted advance in sanitary and medical science, who is not aware that good health is still very much an affair of accident? There are men who actually boast of their good luck, who are without the capacity to enjoy anything which their boasted good luck brings them. We unlucky ones may thank our stars that we are not like them. I know a man who, from some points of view, has had all the

luck, but who has, from my point of view, had none. He is a wealthy banker, something, I believe, very like a millionaire. He is owner of one of the noblest estates in the south of England. But, with so many gifts from fortune's lucky bag, he has the misfortune to be dowered with the most extraordinary disposition. He quarrels with every one. He lives in one wing of the house, his wife and family live in another. He has tried to turn them out, and failed. It is understood that he and his wife have not spoken to each other for years. His children cut him in the streets. He is continually embroiled in law-suits with his relations. As if that were not enough, he is always fighting with the country folks on questions of right of way. His estate not only swarms with warnings to trespassers, but he keeps a small army of retired policemen for the sole purpose of watching for cases of trespass. Some of the footpaths run across waste land, on which there are no crops, no hay, no game, and no nothing. Yet if you step off them a yard on either side, you are sure to have a discussion with one of his watchers. His purpose seems to be to make a passage across any of the recognised public footpaths so full of disagreeables, that, in course of time, people will cease to use them. He is always changing his servants, and he never gives them characters. The neighbouring tradesmen will not work for him, they are sure to have some unpleasantness with him if they do. He has no friends. He lives on good terms with no one. Fortune has placed him in a position in which he is able to make the peculiarity of his disposition widely felt—and he takes care that even his unoffending neighbours feel it. To crown all he looks what he is, a suspicious, peevish, cantankerous creature. I am a proverbially unlucky man; all the same, I would sooner have my luck than his.

It is, to my thinking, a curious outlook on to the world which regards it as a sort of monster competition class. The idea that life is a long-drawn-out competitive examination, in which one has only to do certain well-ascertained things in order to achieve certain well-ascertained results, is not only an unpleasant one to contemplate, but it is, fortunately, false throughout. Life is not necessarily the endless unceasing grind and cram which such an idea supposes. The inspirers of the idea have brought things to a pretty pass. In the prevalent

rage for competition men and women are not only cutting each other's throats, but also, and at the same time, they are cutting their own. The prizes for which the competitors are so frantically contending are being purchased at such a price that they can only be regarded as so much dead loss when won. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand fail to win them. And the point of a very bitter joke is that not improbably, the thousandth, who does win, is the only one who has not tried.

If you want a thing, try to gain it, but not like a madman. So order your life that, while the desired object stands first and foremost, it is still not regarded as the only thing for which to live. We have only one life to live. Let us make the best of it, so that each day, at evening, may bring us peace of mind. Let your pace be steady, so that, prematurely, you may not break down. All the time recognise the fact—do not be afraid to face it—that luck will probably be against you, and that therefore, in spite of all your efforts, the desired object may never be attained. It may possibly come almost within your grasp, and yet may elude you, though you are already touching it with your finger-tips. What of it? It is the fortune of war. In spite of your ill-luck, you are still a lucky man if you are made of that sort of stuff which can laugh at fortune's chances. I know no greater luck than to be made like that; no, nor any rarer. There are many lives which the world calls failures which, to me, seem to be successes, after all. Such, for instance, as the life of the man who works and waits, and waits and works, laughing all the time, even though the reward which he has justly earned is denied him to the end; yes, even when the door into the infinite is opened, and, still unrewarded, fortune throws him through. For I cannot but suspect, when people are crying, "Alas, poor Yorick!" that he was, in truth, a fellow of infinite jest and humour—he had the luck; that he loved his work for the work's own sake; that he loved his life, because he himself was living; that if he dreamed, it tickled him to know it; and that it was with the sportsman's joy that he played a game with fortune, and watched to see if his dreams might, by any chance, come true. And when, in the end, he realised they never would, I can easily believe that it was the humour of the thing which struck

him most of all, and that he was smiling when he died. And what greater luck can a man desire than to be able to part from the world with a smile?

## TWO LETTERS.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER III.

THINGS went on very much as usual for the next few weeks—the Count eager, impassioned, ardent, and devoted, Lettice calm to coldness, unmoved to indifference. In spite of the fact that affairs were pursuing their ordinary course, however, I think we all had a sort of vague impression that there was thunder in the air.

"Do you know, Lettice," I remarked to her one day when we were alone together, "that you have grown very white lately?"

"I never have much colour, you know," said Lettice, without looking up from the book she was reading.

"But this is a different sort of whiteness," I persisted, with my eyes still fixed on her face; "and you are so thin, too."

"Dear me, Ellen, I wish you wouldn't stare so," she exclaimed irritably. "There isn't the slightest difference in me."

"And you are so often cross now," I pursued relentlessly. "Nothing ever used to put you out, and now you are always flaring up about the merest trifles."

She closed her book, and returned my gaze with a sad little smile.

"And so I am bad-tempered as well, am I? Do you know, Ellen, I am afraid you're right. I always feel dreadfully irritable now."

"Then you can't be happy," I said boldly.

She began to play with her magnificent diamond ring. It fell from her wasted little hand, and dropped to the carpet at my feet.

"It must be made smaller," she said in a matter-of-fact voice, in reply to my look.

I picked it up and regarded the costly trinket curiously.

"After all, is it worth while selling oneself for five little glittering stones?" I asked, as I handed it back to her. "Upon my word, Lettice, I am glad I am not you!"

"You may well be so," she answered fiercely, her self-control broken down at last, "for I do not believe there is a more wretched woman in England at the present moment."

I half expected to see her fling the ring away; but after looking at it for a moment with a strange, concentrated gaze, she returned it to the betrothal finger again.

"You will not go on with this marriage, Lettice?"

"I must."

"Remember that an engagement can be broken—a marriage tie, never."

"I shall not break either, Ellen," she answered drearily.

"You will die if you marry a man you hate. You are wasted to a shadow now."

"I would give worlds to have never seen him; but now there is no escape, none."

She spoke in dull, hopeless, lifeless tones.

"How absurd you are!" I exclaimed scornfully. "If you are afraid to tell him, I will."

This time her laugh had a ring of genuine mirth in it.

"Poor child! You little know with what sort of man you have to deal. I am not easily terrified, as you know, but I would as soon face a raging lion as tell the Count da Castello that I meant to break our engagement. No, I have made my bed, and I must lie upon it. It has been my fault all through, and I have no right to complain. Luigi has been everything that is good, and noble, and generous. I shall be quite certain that, if I marry him, he will adore me."

She got up as if to close the conversation, and went towards the window.

"Here he comes!" she said to me with a smile.

As Luigi da Castello entered the room I looked at him curiously—the man of whom Lettice was afraid! For my own part, I wondered why she did not love him—or should have done, rather, if I had not suspected the truth about Arthur Wells. I fancy few women would have been able to resist him as he stood there, instinct with buoyant life and vigorous manly beauty.

He had brought her a narrow gold bangle as a gift, with the word "Lettice" sparkling on it in diamonds. It was a princely offering. I watched him clasp it on the fair wrist, and murmur words of love in her ear. Then I looked at her listless, indifferent face, and marvelled that such apathy could ever satisfy his hungry eagerness. How different she had looked one night, and how she had flushed with pleasure when Arthur had brought her a little book she had expressed a desire to read! It was fortunate that Arthur had not been near the house since the Count arrived. Luigi's jealous eye would have recognised a rival at once. And though, of course, it is absurd to talk about stilettos and vendettas in this

commonplace, everyday England of ours, yet I confess I should not have cared to be a rival who stood in the Count's way.

She thanked him sweetly and coldly for the bracelet, and assented to his proposition that they should go for a stroll in the rose-garden—an old-fashioned, lovely, straggling place where the flowers grew and flourished in fragrant, riotous confusion. She never talked very much to him, seldom starting a topic of her own accord, but then, certainly, the Count talked enough for two.

He was with her an hour, evidently plying her more earnestly than ever. She looked white and exhausted when she came in, like a person who has been strained up to a certain pitch of endurance and can bear no more.

That evening, as she was sitting holding the newspaper, as a means of getting the silence and rest she wanted—for I am certain she hardly read a line for over an hour—she suddenly put it down with a little cry.

"Whatever is the matter?" I enquired hastily.

"Ellen! Only to think—how awful for poor Sir Ludovic! Just read that," and she put the paper into my hand.

I read the paragraph she pointed out to me. It told how Ludovic and Henry Wells—Sir Ludovic's two sons—had been drowned when out yachting. Many other things as terrible have been told in as few lines, but I never remember anything affecting me so much before. The two were so young, so strong; and the poor old man was left so desolate.

I am quite sure that it occurred to neither of us for a long time that this terrible accident would be the means of removing any barrier that there might have been between Arthur Wells and Lettice. Only, like most things in this life, it had come too late.

That night I woke several times, and thought over the terrible news. On each occasion I could see by the radiant moonlight that flooded the room that Lettice's blue eyes were wide open, although she lay as still as though she were asleep.

At last I spoke.

"Lettice!"

"Well?"

"What are you thinking about? I don't believe you have slept at all."

"I am thinking what a pity it is that I have spoilt my life," she answered drearily.

"You are thinking of—of—Arthur?"

She turned a little towards me.

"Ellen, don't think so hardly of me as all that. It is not the money that has made such a difference to me with regard to him, though, of course, other people would think so. But I have known for a long time now that I would rather marry Arthur and live in poverty all my life, than go away from you all with—with the Count."

I said nothing, and she went on:

"I cannot describe to you how I am feeling about it. I believe if I go on with it, it will kill me. To marry him and go away with him to a strange country——"

She stopped, with a half-choked sob.

"Lettice, how absurd you are! Why ever don't you break it off?"

"He would kill me, I believe."

"We don't live in the days of romantic revenge," I remarked. "You are exaggerating things very unnecessarily. The Count is too much of a gentleman to worry you by useless protestations after you have once told him that you have changed your mind."

"He may be a gentleman, Ellen, but above everything else he is a man, and a man of very strong passions and feelings. I shall never dare to thwart him."

She would talk no more after this, and presently fell into a broken slumber, from which she awoke several times, crying, in feverish agony:

"I cannot do it! Oh, I cannot do it!"

She was quite ill in the morning, and stopped in bed. She rose in the afternoon, however, and went downstairs, looking white and exhausted. The first thing she did was to write a little note to the Count at his hotel, asking him to come and see her at five o'clock. He had already been down twice to enquire after her, and had sent her some lovely flowers as usual.

I watched her write the note with some curiosity. There was an air of relief mingled with the terror of her eyes.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

She came to me and took both my hands in hers.

"I am going to take your advice, Ellen, and break off my engagement. I believe I would rather be killed than married me! He will be here in half an hour. Will you keep the others out of the room, Nelly?"

Of course I promised rapturously. I was now quite as eager for the breaking off of the engagement as I had before been for its ratification.

The Count came, his hands again full of

flowers, and was shown into the drawing-room where Lettice waited for him alone.

What passed between them I never knew. Luigi da Castello was, no doubt, terrible in his wrath. He stopped for over an hour, and we watched him go away from behind the muslin curtains. When I went to Lettice I found that she had fainted. She told me that night before we slept that the Count would never trouble her again. She had made him understand clearly that she would rather die than marry him. She had put the matter in too brutal a light for him to possibly make a mistake.

"He is going to leave the country the day after to-morrow," she added. "I shall not breathe freely till I know that he has gone."

Lettice slept badly that night, and she made me restless too. She tossed and murmured and muttered in her sleep, and finally sat erect with a shriek of terror, and her hands pressed convulsively to her heart.

"What is it?" I asked, alarmed.

But she did not seem to hear me. She got out of bed and sought the writing materials that were always to be found on a side-table, and for a few minutes she wrote rapidly on a sheet of paper. She seemed to me to be half awake. I got up, too, and bent over her. What she had written ran thus, word for word:

"SIGNORINA.—I need not tell you that your decision of this afternoon has left me heart-broken. You alone know how I have loved you; but I am not the man to force myself on any woman, and reproaches from me would be out of place and useless.

"I leave England to-morrow. Will you grant me one last interview before I go from you for ever? Considering our intimate and tender friendship, I think I am entitled to ask this one poor favour. It may not be according to English etiquette; that I am a foreigner must be my excuse for making the request.

"I shall await you at our old trysting-place at four o'clock.—DA CASTELLO."

I placed my hand on her shoulder to rouse her.

"What are you writing this for, Lettice?" I asked, rather sharply. "Upon my word, you have Da Castello on the brain!"

She woke to full consciousness with a long shudder, and clung to me with desperate energy. Then her eyes fell on the words she had just written.

"Ah, it will come true, then!" she said.

I soothed her agitation as well as I could, but for a long time her terror was almost uncontrollable.

"Was it a dream?" I asked at last, when she was a little calmer.

"Yes; it was a dream—such a dream!"

She paused, mechanically pushing back her long, fair hair with a trembling hand.

"You have always laughed at me for fearing the Count, Ellen. Well, listen to my dream, and judge whether or not I am right in doing so!"

"I dreamed that I was sitting alone with you in the drawing-room just before lunch, when the servant came in with a letter from Luigi in her hand. I opened and read it. There it lies before you," she added, pointing to the sheet of paper on the table, "word for word, exactly as I read it then. You see that the Count asks me in it to give him a farewell interview at our old trysting-place—the glen. Well, I dreamed that I showed you the letter, and that you tried to dissuade me from going. 'It will only upset you,' you said. But I argued that I had after all treated him very badly, and that a last good-bye before parting from me for ever was not much to ask. So—I went!"

She paused a moment, and her voice when she spoke again sounded thick and dry.

"I went. Luigi was there before me, waiting for me. I had been afraid before, but I was not afraid now. He was quite quiet in voice and manner—gentle, and rather sad. I felt very sorry for him. He had been so desperate, so angrily passionate the day before. Now it was all different, and I almost began to like him—and trust him. He said he only just wanted to bid me good-bye and wish me every happiness. He said I had given him nothing but sweet and pleasant memories to look back upon.

"His voice was very soft and low, and his eyes tender and sad. He said a man could not hope to marry his ideal, and I had been that to him. He would never forget me. Then he asked, still in the same voice, if there was—any one else; he said I must not think he grudged me my happiness because he himself was disappointed, only he would like to know.

"He was so unlike himself, Ellen, so frank, and kind, and quiet! I began to remember how cruel I had always been to him. I told him that he would soon marry a much better woman than I; that I was not as good as he thought me; that he must try and forget me, because I had

never been worthy of his great love. And he listened to it all with downcast eyes, only repeating when I stopped:

"Is there any one else?"

"I asked him why he wanted to know—I was not a bit afraid—and he said it was because he should like to wish him happiness. He had been so good and kind that I thought I would be quite open and frank with him at the last. So I told him yes, that there had been some one else all the time; that I had never loved him really. Then he lifted his eyes and looked at me. Ellen, I pray to God I may never really see such expression in human eyes! There was the fierceness of a lost despairing soul in them.

"He drew nearer to me, still looking at me, although I shrank from him. For the first time I began to feel afraid.

"He took my left hand in his, and stooping down, said:

"You shall never live to be any other man's wife. I love you too much for that."

"Then something bright flashed, and I suddenly felt a horrible cold feeling in my heart—so cold and sharp that I knew that he had stabbed me—that I was dying! And I heard his slow, strange laugh fading away in the distance—and I knew that he had left me to die alone——"

She stopped, and the convulsive shudder came over her again. In spite of myself I was struck by the extraordinarily accurate way she had remembered the dream, and the vivid manner in which she had described it. The letter, too—the fatal letter that was to decoy her to her death—lay there before my eyes!

I tried to laugh away her fears, in spite of my own conviction that they were well-founded, but it was useless. The rest of that night we neither of us slept. What would the morrow bring forth?

We were sitting in the drawing-room before lunch when the servant brought Lettice a letter in the Count's well-known delicate Italian writing.

"The man is waiting for an answer, miss," she said, as she went out.

Lettice broke the seal and began to read.

"Come here, Ellen," she said.

I came and looked over her shoulder. There, line for line, word for word, was the letter of her dream! She took the

sheet of paper that she had written the night before from her pocket, and laid them side by side. They were identical! We looked at each other.

"It is a warning!" I said, awestruck and no longer doubting.

"Yes, it is a warning, thank Heaven, and one which I dare not disregard. But for my dream who knows what my end would have been!"

She rose and, going over to the devonport, wrote the following words:

"I do not wish to see your face again. You said your last good-bye to me yesterday. I cannot afford to risk the possible repetition of such a scene. Besides, this time might not the Italian stiletto avenge the Italian wrong!—LETTICE."

It was not until she knew that the Count had actually been seen to leave the place, that Lettice ventured outside the house.

Those days were days of sickness and of dread with her, so fully persuaded was she of the reality of her dream. In a week's time the following lines, the last she ever had from him, came from Luigi da Castello:

"You are right. I meant to kill you. How did you know?"

What I have written about occurred more than forty years ago, for my story is a true one.

Lettice lived her long and happy life as Lady Wells, and no one but myself ever knew how nearly her English treachery had been avenged by her Italian lover.

Before me on the table lie the two duplicate letters, both faded, yellow, old, but both identically the same. The one in round, trembling, girlish characters; the other in Luigi da Castello's elegant, flowing, foreign hand. The dream letter and the real one!

Scoff at the coincidence if you like! Solve the mystery if you can!

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND EXTRA AUTUMN NUMBER.

WITH ALMANACK FOR 1894.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

## THE FORTUNES OF PHYLLIS.

PRICE  
6d.

### CONTENTS.

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#### CHAP.

#### PAGE

I.—PROLOGUE. LEFT ALONE . . . . .	1
II.—ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER . . . . .	5
III.—IN CHARGE OF LADY DOROTHEA . . . . .	10
IV.—A FLIGHT FROM THE RAJAH . . . . .	12
V.—“GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART” . . . . .	16
VI.—A TIGER ON THE TRACK . . . . .	18
VII.—IN THE BANKS OF DEATH . . . . .	20
VIII.—IN CAPTIVITY . . . . .	21
IX.—THE RAJAH’S FATE . . . . .	22
X.—THE SOLDIER’S RETURN . . . . .	23

#### AUTUMN LEAVES—

#### PAGE

THE “SHIP” AT SHELLBEACH . . . . .	25
HIS DANGEROUS FRIEND . . . . .	30
A NIGHT OF PERIL . . . . .	35
THE MISER’S BARN . . . . .	41
AN ADVENTURE IN THE HIGHLANDS . . . . .	46
TABLE OF EVENTS, 1892-3 . . . . .	51
OBITUARY . . . . .	57

CALENDAR FOR 1894.

## THE FORTUNES OF PHYLLIS.

### CHAPTER I.

#### PROLOGUE. LEFT ALONE.

THE Guards were to go. Orders to embark early on the morrow had come to the battalion quartered in the Tower, just as “last post” was sounded, and the skirl and rattle of fifes and drums had roused the echoes from every nook and corner of the grey old fortress. The time-honoured ceremony of challenging the keys had been duly performed, and the keys themselves, that unlocked so many Bluebeard’s chambers, prisons, torture chambers, dungeons stained with the secret crimes of long ago, these keys, under proper escort, had been marched off to the quarters of the Lieutenant of the Tower, and the whole building was being gradually overspread by the spirit of repose, when the rattle of the wheels of a hansom on the rough stones of Tower Hill, and the clank of the drawbridge under a hasty tread, with the challenge of sentries, and the opening of doors and windows here and there, betokened that something was going on beyond the usual routine.

The warning of sudden departure spread like wild-fire through the regiment, and

the sober brick buildings where the soldiers were quartered swarmed like an ant-hill. The stiff routine of duty was relaxed in the stress of circumstances. The canteen was reopened, and was speedily crowded with men in every stage of dress and undress, who in every variety of dialect or brogue were eagerly discussing the prospects of the future. The general tone was jubilant, but there were not wanting voices of uncheerful presage.

“We’ll be left wid Pharo and his chariots at the bottom of the Red Sea; divil a wan of us will iver come back again,” cried Figgins, a brawny, capacious Irishman, who generally prophesied evil things.

“But there’s fine feeding out there,” cried another, who had heard good accounts of the flesh-pots of Egypt.

“Yis, for the vultures,” rejoined Figgins gloomily.

“Well, anyhow, Larry, them birds will have fine pickings out of you,” rejoined the other.

And stout Figgins was overwhelmed in a general chorus of laughter, and a scene of jovial horse-play followed in which individual voices and opinions were lost.

The general ferment communicated itself to the other inmates of the Tower.



The Beefeaters, to whom ancient custom suggested a square meal in the way of supper when the labours of the day were fairly over, these gallant yeomen of the guard, for the most part, threw up knife and fork, and turned out to visit their friends among the non-commissioned officers of the regiment to discuss the stirring news. One among these was Sergeant Yeoman Duffield, who, in the dignity of his position, did not forget that he was once a Sergeant of the Guards. But having gathered all the intelligence that came to hand, and resisting, or rather evading many tempting invitations to partake of drinks, Duffield made his way back to his own quarters, which were picturesquely but rather inconveniently placed in one of the old towers of the outer bail.

"The regiment's away for Egypt in the morning, mem," said Duffield to his spouse, a comfortable, pleasant-looking dame. "And I wed advise ye, mem, to have some substantial settlement with the Captain before he goes."

A frown and a significant glance from his spouse, put the stout beef-eater to silence. The glance was in the direction of a deeply splayed embrasure of the old tower, through which the glow of the summer twilight shone upon the figure of a little maid of nine or ten years old, who, reclining in the grim, stony casemate, was entirely absorbed in the perusal of some well-thumbed volume.

Sergeant Yeoman Duffield, for all his tufted halbert, his slashed doublet, his purpled hose and rosetted shoes, was in private life but the meek and humble instrument of his wife's good pleasure. He addressed her always as "mem," and allowed that to his happy marriage with a bride who had been for many years nurse and confidential servant in the family of Lord Coleworth, one of the high officials permanently reigning at the Horse Guards, he owed his present comfortable position.

"Now, Miss Phyllis," said Mrs. Duffield briskly, "don't you go spoiling your pretty eyes reading that nasty small print; and it's long after bed-time."

"Oh, not just yet," cried Phyllis, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders. "I must finish this next chapter, Duffie dear."

"Ah, the dear child always does get over me with those chapters," said Mrs. Duffield, with a sigh; "I never do happen on the finish of one."

"You're just a bit slack in the deescipline,

mem, if ye'll allow me to say it," struck in the Sergeant. "But, my word," he added, as the clank of a steel scabbard was heard on the stone staircase, "here's the Captain himself, I do believe! Now be firm with him, mem, be firm."

Duffield drew himself up and saluted as the figure of a young or at all events young-looking officer, in the undress uniform of the Guards, appeared in the arched doorway.

"It is Master Gerald!" cried Mrs. Duffield, her eyes dilated with pleasure. She had been acquainted with the young gentleman in his cradle, and had brought him up, as far as he had been brought up, and was still immensely proud and fond of him.

Phyllis looked up from her book in momentary interest. "Oh, it is only Paddie," she murmured, and returned to the perusal of her book.

"But where is Phyllis?" cried the Captain in lace, looking eagerly round. "Phyllis, my bird, come down from your perch and give poor Paddie a kiss."

"Oh, dear!" said Phyllis, with a sigh, "why do you always come at the most interesting part?" But she climbed down from her window and came and sat on the Captain's knee, and stroked his face in a kindly and appreciative way.

"Phyllis dear, you do love me a little, don't you?" asked Captain Coleworth anxiously.

"Oh, just a little, Paddie," said Phyllis unconcernedly. "Just as much as this, you know," marking off a very minute portion of a little pink finger-nail.

"But I'm not content with that, Phyllis," said the Captain, "and I'm going away, dear, and perhaps you will never see poor Paddie again."

The Captain's voice quivered, and Phyllis, touched by some subtle sympathy, threw her arms about his neck.

"I will love you an awful lot, dear Paddie, all the time you are away."

"But, Phyllis dear," continued Captain Coleworth in a low voice, "would you mind for once, instead of calling me Paddie, call me father, and give me one good hug, and say: Good-bye, father!"

"I don't know," murmured Phyllis, hanging off coyly, "I don't think I could;" and then seeing a cloud of disappointment on the Captain's face, she threw her arms about him and murmured the words he wanted to hear.

Coleworth gathered the child in his

arms and held her to his heart so tightly, that Phyllis cried out to be let go. He could not trust himself to words, and Dame Duffield, herself a good deal moved, could only pat him kindly on the shoulder.

"Don't you fret about Miss Phyllis, she'll be safe enough with me till you come back. And, Master Gerald, at such times you officer gents are often short of cash, and Nurse has got some yellow-boys put away in the old stocking——"

"Dear old soul!" said the Captain in a choked voice. "But not from you; and if I don't come back, see Lady Coleworth. She knows everything, and will be a friend to Phyllis. Dear Nurse, good-bye. Phyllis, my darling, one more kiss!"

The Captain was gone, and the Sergeant, who had discreetly made himself scarce from the commencement of his visit, now showed his hatchet face in the stairway. "But, mem," he cried, "I trust ye've taken good security from the Captain."

"The very best, Sergeant," rejoined his spouse. "I've got Phyllis."

The Sergeant's lengthened visage was a study.

Very early next morning, while Phyllis was fast asleep in her little turret chamber, Nurse came and roused her, and helped her to dress in great haste.

"Don't ye hear the drums, lassie, and the bugles? The lads will be marching out, and we'll not miss the sight."

And Phyllis was at the top of the winding stair and out on the battlements of the Byward Tower while Nurse was pounding doggedly on, half-way up. Already the regiment was formed on the parade ground, officers and markers were running to and fro. Sharp words of command were heard, and with a great clash and clang of drums and cymbals the companies, falling into fours, marched forth to the stirring tune of the "British Grenadiers, echoed back with resonant clamour from the grim enclosing walls.

"There goes Paddle; good-bye, Paddle good-bye all," cried Phyllis with irrepressible enthusiasm, as she recognised her Captain at the head of his company. The Captain turned and waved his sword, and half a hundred heads, surmounted by as many black bearskins, were turned upwards at the same moment. Most of the men knew little Phyllis, and grinned and nodded their adieux, but Figgins, the big Irishman, who had naturally enough appropriated Phyllis's greeting specially to himself, turned round and cried: "Good-bye, little maid, we'll

bring ye back a slice of the pyramids to play wid."

Roofs and battlements were now sprinkled thickly with spectators; heads and shoulders were thrust out of windows, and cries of encouragement or farewell broke the decorous stillness of the Tower precincts. The river sparkled beyond in full flood, with ships getting under weigh, capstans and winches clanking and sailors yo-hoing, while fainter and fainter in the distance sounded the march of the British Grenadiers.

And now all the brave Bearskins were gone, and in their place marched up and down on sentry-go the men of another regiment, no longer Guards, but habited in the more sober costume of the line.

"Why, they're more like policemen," said Phyllis discontentedly, who had been reared, so to say, on Bearskins.

"Oh, hush, my dear, they're a very fine regiment," cried Nurse; "the Royal Cambrian Rangers, with a beautiful white goat."

"Phyllis! Phyllis!" cried a voice from below; "come along, quick—quick. Come along to Uncle Grimshaw's wharf; we'll see them all embark. Come along."

"I'm coming, Arthur," cried Phyllis joyously, whirling down the corkscrew staircase, while panting Nurse toiled after her in vain. "Gone, the thoughtless lassie, and without any breakfast!" exclaimed Nurse. But Arthur Gray was sure to take good care of his little maid, and, indeed, he had already purchased a couple of scones at the breakfast-stall at the corner; and munching one of these, Phyllis, holding Arthur by the hand, danced joyously along through devious passages and narrow byways till they came suddenly out into the open, where the river, and the ships, and all the whirling tide seemed to rush upon them.

Seeing that the hour was early and the embarkation not extensively advertised, it might have been expected that the Guards would have had a quiet march through the City. But the hour was not too matutinal for the workmen, porters, packers, with all the tribes of early market birds, who, in some instinctive way, knew everything that was going on, and had already filled to repletion the streets through which the troops would pass. The martial music died away in the crowd, the big drum was almost stove in by the pressure, and the narrow red and black column, with the white belts and shoul-

dered rifles, was almost lost to sight. All were cheering, shouting, calling out encouraging catch-words, seeking individual recognition. "Are ye there, Jem Hallet! Here's Mary!" and a soldier's sweetheart is passed along through the crowd, and steps out, if not gaily, at least cheerfully, beside her Jem. "Figgins's wife!" was hailed with delighted cheers in the form of a battered old market-woman, who diffused an agreeable flavour of potheen. "It's just my mother-in-law, God bless her!" cried Figgins, unheeded, to his comrades, as he carefully stowed away sundry half-crowns that the brave old dame had scraped together to start him handsomely on the campaign. But the wharf, where the men embarked, was held by a strong party of the Cambrians, and sweethearts, wives, mothers-in-law, brothers, sisters, good chums and old friends, all had to break away with one firm hand-clasp and husky farewell as sole remembrance in the perhaps solitary days to come.

But Phyllis and her friend Arthur Gray were delightfully placed, with a private view, as it were, of the whole ceremony of embarkation. London Bridge was black with heads; drays, and waggons, and early buses, crowded with outside passengers, all stopped for the moment and helped to pile up the living fretwork; people jumped on barges or clambered upon the wherries that hung to the dripping stairs; the men who were loading the Continental steamboats crowded to the front, the crates and cases swinging idly in mid-air. And here, too, everybody cheered and shouted their lustiest, while the bells of the City churches, waking up for the day, began their soft clamour. There was a ruffle of drums, recovered from the squeeze, and with one accord, as the tenders, crowded with soldiers, gave their warning whistles, a wild chorus of whistling broke forth from all the steam-pipes around. Phyllis shouted, too, and waved a morsel of cambric, and Arthur threw up his cap so high that a puff of wind caught it and blew it into the river.

All was bright and sparkling just about the bridge; bridges and churches and Paul's hazy dome, all quite white and radiant; but looking downwards, there hung a deep, impenetrable haze, like a curtain; and as the boats, with their scarlet and steel-bound freight, glided slowly down, they were soon lost to sight in the folds of this black and gloomy shade.

As they peered and strained their eyes to see the very last of the old battalion, now a gleam of the scarlet, now a flicker of light from the steel, out of the gloomy shade there came sweeping along with the tide a great black barge with two men tugging with might and main at a huge sweep, while a boy, with his back against the tiller, crammed it over hard a-port. Then suddenly hauling the sweep on board, the men hurried to a huge hawser, and seizing a coil of rope attached thereto, hurled it with considerable accuracy of aim in the direction of the two young people. Phyllis covered her eyes, but Arthur, dashing forward, dexterously caught the rope, and hauling at the hawser, managed with some difficulty to slip the loop of it over a big iron hook. Then for a moment it seemed doubtful whether the wharf would hold back the barge, or the barge carry away the wharf; but finally the toughness of inert matter prevailed, and the barge swung captive alongside.

"Forty bales from the 'Jumna' for Grimshaw's," cried the man in charge of the flat.

"All right," said Arthur. "On whose account?"

"Don't ast me; some blossoming toff," growled the bargee. But Arthur seized the manifest and read:

"Shipped on the 'Jumna,' on account of the Rajah of Kandurga."

"What are you doing with that paper, Arthur?" said the shrill voice of Mr. Grimshaw himself. He was small and rather wizened; generally, as now, dressed in a tweed suit and felt hat, rather the worse for wear; and often was very much at home in a little grimy launch, that would puff noisily along among docks and tiers of shipping, and might sometimes be seen with a barge at its tail or a loaded wherry. But Arthur averred to Phyllis that seen in evening dress, which he sometimes assumed for a City dinner, Uncle Grim looked a thorough patrician, and that you might have fancied him wearing a pig-tail, or with a wig and sword and knee-breeches, without any violent strain on the imaginative faculties. But Uncle Grim was very cross at times, as Arthur acknowledged, and this was one of his times, for he scowled at Arthur as he snatched the manifest from his hands, and he looked crossly at Phyllis, so that the child was glad to find herself on terra firma once more and under the protecting agis of the Tower.

And there she met the white goat of which Nurse had told her, and tried to make friends with it, but found it disdainful of her advances. A big grey wolf-hound, also a fresh arrival, was of a more amiable disposition, and followed Phyllis to the steps of the Byward Tower, in the cool shade of which they both sat down. And there drowsiness overcame the child, and she fell asleep on the steps, her head pillowed on the soft coat of her shaggy friend. And here she was found by Colonel Lloyd, of the Cambrian Rangers, who was taking a turn round the place with Major Jones and a beefeater to show the way.

"Who would think of finding a little fairy princess in this rough old prison, Jones!"

"Pretty cetur!" said Jones. "What do they call her?"

"'Tis Phyllis, sir," the Sergeant Yeoman's little girl," said the veteran.

"Oh, Phyllis!" cried the Major, and in his sharp falsetto he hummed a stave of the song:

"Phyllis is my only joy,  
Faithless as the wind or seas:  
Sometimes coming, sometimes coy,  
Yet she never fails to please."

## CHAPTER II. ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER.

IF seven years—or perhaps eight, or even nine—have elapsed since Phyllis fell asleep on the steps of the Byward Tower, it must not be supposed that we intend to depict our heroine as emerging from a Rip Van Winkle kind of trance, and finding herself transformed from a child into a young woman. That kind of transformation is not effected so easily. The pretty, perilous passage, full of hidden griefs and evident delights, is not to be accomplished in a dream; the golden bridge betwixt seven and seventeen is not to be crossed except by dint of hard scrambling and climbing. Yet the interval had brought no violent changes in Phyllis's surroundings. The Sergeant Yeoman was dead, and his official residence was occupied by some other stout beefeater. But Phyllis still lived with her "dear Duffie," and not very far from the Tower either, for in Nightingale Row, where they had taken up their abode, two out of the four pepper-box turrets of the White Tower could be seen peering over a blank wall in a quite startling manner.

Otherwise Nightingale Row was almost shut in by docks, huge warehouses, high brick walls, and swing-bridges. Yet the houses were handsome and substantial, with

a florid comeliness about them suggestive of an earlier origin than this commercial age, and that they were probably a survival of the lost faubourg, swallowed up less than a century ago by docks and shipping. Some knowledge of the locality, of times and of tides, which if they wait for no man often themselves kept waiting numbers of men and horses and drays, was necessary to find a direct way to Nightingale Row. But for Phyllis on her daily trip to school and back again, the transit had no difficulties. When drawbridges were raised and steamers and lines of barges floated in and out, balancing between the tranquil stillness of the pent-up waters and the rough-and-tumble of the fervid tideway, there was generally a tug to be hailed or the harbour-master's launch, or a spring from one barge to another and a scramble up the dock gate might shorten the passage. And as Phyllis had grown up among the shipping, she was a general favourite with everybody about the docks, so that bargees were kind and labourers civil, and ship captains brought her gifts from beyond seas, while apprentices and mates cherished romantic dreams on her behalf.

All this time Coleworth was still absent. The Guards came back, but he was not with them. He had obtained a staff appointment in India, and, subsequently, was placed at the head of an expedition to settle the question of a boundary line on some wild Indian frontier. The pay and allowances were fairly good, and the Sergeant Yeoman's heart was rejoiced by liberal remittances. Then bad news came to hand. The exploring expedition had been attacked and dispersed, and Colonel Coleworth—for he had gained brevet rank by his services—was missing. Survivors reported that he had been seen to fall under the blades of a dozen truculent tribesmen; and though his body was not recovered, yet so little doubt existed as to his fate that his name was removed from the army list, and his relatives went into mourning for his death.

Phyllis, too, was dressed in sable garments, but that might have been for the death of Sergeant Duffield, who died at this time. His widow inherited a comfortable amount in savings, of her own money, 'tis true, and that, with certain snug investments of her own, secured the household from want. But Phyllis's education must be provided for, and her future position settled, and Mrs. Duffield travelled westwards to interview Lord Coleworth on the

subject. But in this object she was foiled. Lord Coleworth had retired from his official position. His son's death had affected him a good deal, and he was quite feeble and broken now, while Lady Coleworth watched over him with admirable care and assiduity, keeping from him everything likely to worry or disturb him.

Now Mrs. Duffield belonged to the age of the first Lady Coleworth, Gerald's mother, and she had no faith in the reigning spouse, who had been a widow with two children of her own when she married Lord Coleworth. Undoubtedly she was a clever managing woman, and having no children by her present marriage, she was naturally anxious to provide for her own two, as well as to secure her own future independence. But Lord Coleworth's personal means had been trifling, derived chiefly from his own economies, while he had inherited from his first wife, who had left everything unreservedly in his hands, a handsome fortune, amounting, perhaps, to a hundred thousand pounds. All this Lord Coleworth had carefully explained to Mrs. Vyvian, the handsome and clever widow who had fascinated him. He was a man of the strictest probity, and incapable of anything like deceit or dissimulation himself, was intolerant of such conduct in others. And justice demanded that such fortune as came to him through his first marriage should descend to the offspring of that marriage, his only son Gerald. To his chosen wife he could only offer a share in his very handsome income while he lived, and at his death the sum of ten thousand pounds which he had saved, and which should be hers absolutely, together with such economies as she might be able to effect in the future. Only one contingency could affect this resolution. Should his son prove unworthy, he would disinherit him without scruple. Mrs. Vyvian had assented to all this very gracefully; but during the years which had elapsed since their marriage the position had changed a good deal. Dick and Ruby Vyvian were gay, affectionate, pleasant young people, who became, as time went on, very dear to the old man's heart. And Lady Coleworth had assumed the supreme management of affairs, and her influence over her husband seemed unbounded. Yet she herself well knew that this influence had its limits. Lord Coleworth would deplore with her that her children were so slenderly provided for.

"Let us save for the dear creatures," he would say; "let us live on five hundred a year and put by all the rest for the young ones." But this did not suit Lady Coleworth at all. "Rather let them all share alike, yours and mine," she had ventured to say. But on this Lord Coleworth assumed an air of cold surprise.

"What you suggest would be dishonourable on my part," and Lady Coleworth did not venture to urge the matter again.

But when the presumed death of Gerald Coleworth was reported, Lady Coleworth saw that her opportunity had arrived.

"Dear Stephen," she said, "you will of course make a new will and leave everything to me."

Lord Coleworth was surprised, but he could not but own that the request was a reasonable one. Yet, so punctilious was he that he thought it right to communicate with the nearest of kin of his late wife before altering the dispositions of his will. The first Lady Coleworth's only sister had married the Earl of Lilanelyd, and only one child was born of the marriage, that child being now a young woman, no longer very youthful, who was known as Lady Dorothea Wynne. And Lady Dorothea being a great heiress, naturally had been much sought after by the gilded youth of the period. But the only one she ever favoured was her cousin, Gerald Coleworth, and him she discarded on coming to hear of some doubtful conduct on his part; for Lady Dorothea was of a very high and lofty nature, and chivalrously devoted to redressing the wrongs of her own sex. However, as to the matter of Lady Coleworth's money, she begged her uncle to dispose of it as he pleased, for if, as seemed now certain, poor Gerald was no more, nobody was concerned in the matter, except himself and those connected with him. And upon that it only remained to set the family lawyer at work to draw up a new will.

Thus all was rosy and pleasant in Lady Coleworth's horizon, when a threatening cloud in the shape of Mrs. Duffield appeared upon the scene. Not that my lady was unprepared; she had been taken into Gerald's confidence; she, if any one, was acquainted with the history of Phyllis from her birth. Mrs. Duffield's knowledge began when the child was already two years old, and thus she was under a disadvantage.

"It is the old story," said Lady Coleworth coldly; "but I promised Gerald to

befriend the child, and as far as my means allow I will do so."

And she would make a certain allowance out of her own private purse till Phyllis was eighteen, by which time she ought to be able to earn her own living. For the rest, Lady Coleworth washed her hands of the whole matter. And she finished with a gesture that reminded Mrs. Duffield, so she said, of Pontius Pilate.

But all this is ancient history, and Phyllis as she is now demands our attention, a piquant, laughing little beauty, for whom her present life and the love of those about her is full and engrossing enough. She is known as Miss Coleworth, certainly—Nurse took care that she should be so far distinguished—and she is proud of a father who died fighting for his country. But as for her family, if she has any, she would never give up dear Duffie and Arthur Gray, to say nothing of old Captain Ironbridge and lots of others, for any unknown and uncourteous kindred. And as for the future, she has her music, and a voice which good judges pronounce to be of excellent quality. Is not Phyllis a pupil at the School of Music on the Embankment, which is but a stone's throw after all from Nightingale Row?

Anyhow, it is a delight to sing duets with Arthur Gray, who is a fine baritone, and makes the old sconces ring again, and the cut-glass drops play a little chime, when he sings in Uncle Grimshaw's old-fashioned drawing-room. Mr. Grimshaw has retired from business, and Grimshaw's wharf has been let to a steamboat company. But Grimshaw himself does not look much older, and he still has a share in a steam-tug company, and goes up and down the river in his noisy little launch. People say that he is enormously rich, but that he mistrusts everybody, and prophesies that the Bank of England itself will break in such and such a year, and so keeps all his money in gold in a strong-room beneath his house. There is such a room, for Arthur once saw his uncle unlock it, but there were no heaps of gold and jewels to be seen, and Grimshaw angrily said, when he found the boy had observed him, that he kept there his old business ledgers, in case anybody should make an unfounded claim upon him. But if Uncle Grim were rich, poor Arthur did not get much benefit from his wealth. Certainly his uncle had sent him to a public school—it was St. Paul's and involved a twelve miles journey every day—but then he put Arthur into

a shipping office, where he worked very hard for very little pay. He was to work his own way as Uncle Grimshaw had done. But as his principals compounded with their creditors every year or two, it did not seem to Arthur as if there were much use in getting to the very top of the tree.

But August had come, and schools of music, as well as every other kind, were in vacation. The weather had been wet and cold, but cleared all of a sudden, and a spell of glorious sunshine followed. It was glorious, that is, if you had nothing to do but loll in the shade; but for people who had to move about in the City it was a little too glorious. London began to gasp for breath; the streets were ovens, the shops were hothouses. But for fruits, and ices, and cold drinks there would have been general slaughter from heat apoplexy. It was baking hot, too, in Nightingale Row. Grimshaw had already made his escape in a big ocean steamer for Norway. Mrs. Duffield suggested that they should go—she and Phyllis—to Southend; but the heat of the transit, and the probably still greater heat to be suffered in narrow quarters, deterred them.

And then Arthur came whirling in, calling for Phyllis just as he used to do when they were boy and girl together. His governors had given him a week's holiday, in consequence of having called in an accountant to arrange their affairs, and as Uncle Grim was away he would borrow his launch, and they would all go up the river. "But isn't she a very shabby old thing?" queried Phyllis doubtfully. Shabby for want of painting and gilding, perhaps; but in her inward parts of exemplary brightness, and one of the fastest boats on the river. Phyllis thought that the plan was of a promising nature, and Mrs. Duffield, who would have done anything to please her, agreed to go. It was like starting from their own door, for the launch was in dock close alongside, and they provisioned her, and fitted up the little cabin so that Phyllis and Mrs. Duffield could sleep on board, while Arthur, with a tent and waterproof sheet, would camp out on shore.

And away went the "Firefly" in the cool of the evening, threading her way through the crowd of shipping below bridge, saluting the old Tower with a salvo on the steam whistle, and smothering loudly under the echoing bridges. The myriad lights of Westminster were showing in the opal clearness, and on the

terrace of the Houses of Parliament members thereof were congregated in crowds with gaily-dressed dames interspersed. These the "Firefly" saluted with an ironic kind of screech, and then gave a round O of amazement at the gap left by the fallen walls of Millbank Prison. Bryce, the engineer of the "Firefly," was an elderly man, very silent and reserved, who made of the steam whistle a kind of outlet for his own repressed feelings. He blew a whiff at Lambeth Palace, warm and lucent in the evening glow; at the pot-teries, wreathed in smoke, that took strange glowing tints from the diffused light. In Chelsea Reach, where the waters glowed in opalescent tints, and the boat seemed to cut out swathes of liquid gold, Bryce sounded a solemn note for the sake of Cheyne Walk; and there the pleasant homely terrace, the red-brick tower, the pleasant gardens, the windows veiled with sun-blinds, all shared in the general glamour. Lucent, too, were the lawns of Hurlingham, where lamps were shining forth, and the soft strains of a string band seemed to invite to the dance.

Bryce's Pandean steam-pipe gave a sigh for the vanished Terrace and the old wooden bridge of Putney, that together seemed to speak of pleasant, prosperous city and river life; and he hooted horribly under the granite arch of the new bridge, but that was only a warning to the innumerable pleasure craft that were afloat on the full tide. And club races were going on at Hammersmith, with gun-firing, and flashing off of fours and eights, all with quite ghostly effect in the twilight; and Chiswick was passed, and the osler-bound solitudes beyond, and Barnes' and Mortlake's jolly, hospitable shores, and the last of the real Thames-side villages, still almost unsophisticated and untouched, dear old Strand-on-the-Green, with the peaked outline of Kew's charming balustraded bridge gleaming white against the thick foliage of the eyot beyond, where Brentford's coal barges loom dark against the tawny orange glow. Quietude is on the scene, and semi-darkness in the shade of lordly trees, and the stroke of the hour sounds solemnly over the water from Isleworth's dark tower; but the "Firefly" wakens things up considerably with a succession of fiendish yells as she passes between the massive piers of the new half-tide lock, that is to keep everything afloat and awash irrespective of the vagaries of the ocean tides.

By this time Arthur has got out the side-lights, and it was time for coming in sight of Richmond Bridge. They found it all festooned with lamps and the river crowded with boats hung with lights of all kinds, a veritable feast of lanterns, while the shores are festooned with coloured lamps, and the pleasant gardens and lofty terraces glow from shore to summit. We have chanced upon an evening fête, and the crew of the "Firefly" feel for the moment that their craft, rough from the swollen tideway and rusted with sea-spray, is not of the elegant tournure adapted for such displays. And there is the danger of jostling these light fairy structures, all lights and flowers, and spilling the oil of the twinkling lamps over the elegant costumes of Cleopatra and her attendants; but soon comes the darkness again, black as Erebus from the contrast of the recent brilliance. Yet the moon was still up—a gentle, delicate half-moon—shining behind old Twitnam's tall, dignified houses and tufted groves, while the ferry-boat leaves a track of silver ripples in the dark waters. Phyllis bethinks her of the song, and warbles forth:

"Ho ye ho! who's for the ferry?  
I'll row ye so quick, and I'll row ye so steady,  
And tis but a penny to Twickenham Town!"

And ah! for a summer's night on the river, there only wants music and song to complete the spell of its enchantment.

"I wish we could fix this happy time and make it last for ever," cried Arthur, who was stretched on the deck at the feet of Phyllis.

"Toujours perdrix," cried Phyllis, laughing. "Not for me. I so long for new scenes and new faces!"

Arthur's face darkened.

"Phyllis," he said, "I believe you are as fickle as your namesake.

"Though, alas! too late I find  
Nothing can her fancy fix,  
Yet the moment she is kind  
I forgive her all her tricks."

"Thank you for so much," replied Phyllis lightly; and then Bryce, who had not been heard of for some time, gave a warning shriek for the address of the lock-keeper at Teddington, and presently they were in the deep, dripping darkness of the lock, and the roar of waters sounded in their ears, as winches rattled and ironwork clattered overhead, and they rose softly into the moonlight again.

It was too dark now to go any further, and they blew off steam and made fast

under the bank to a stout old alder. And as they supped they watched the rockets from Richmond blazing over the trees, and fire balloons sailing majestically into space. And then Bryce curled himself up under a tarpaulin in the bows, and Arthur found a lodging in a neighbouring cottage, and the other two made the most of the little saloon, through which the summer wind played refreshingly all night long.

And soon after dawn fires were lighted and steam got up, and before the heat of the day came on, the "Firefly" had made an excellent run, with only Royal Windsor on the way to vary the pleasant tameness of grassy banks, and lawns, and country houses, varied by occasional gas-works and factories, till at Bray Lock they ascended to what Phyllis called the drawing-room floor, and came to an anchor by the wooded heights of Oliveden, where they spent the day pleasantly enough.

Next morning the "Firefly" did not start very early, as the day promised to be cool, and there was a general reluctance to leave their pleasant anchorage. Phyllis, too, was strangely depressed.

"I feel as if the best part of the voyage was over, Arthur," she said. "Perhaps we shall never have such a happy time again."

"Oh! why not?" cried Arthur. "Why should we not sail on together always, Phyllis?"

"Well, we shan't, you'll see," said Phyllis despondently but firmly. "Some bolt out of the blue will come, and we shall drift thousands of miles apart."

But getting under weigh again, all such presentiments were put to flight. And they had now reached a part of the country where Mrs. Duffield felt at home. In yonder little village she was born, and thence at eighteen she had gone to be under-nurse at Coleworth Court, and round the next bend of the river sure enough they would come to the Court itself. She had not thought of that, and it gave her quite a turn as she reflected that in this beautiful place Phyllis should have found a home, and have been reared in the lap of ease and luxury to take a great position in the world. For had not Master Gerald told her more than once that all would be made right at last, and that Phyllis would be received by all the world as his own true daughter? Perhaps she herself was not free from blame in having acquiesced so quietly in Lady Coleworth's decision. There were others to

whom she might have appealed, and though she had no certain knowledge, yet she knew more perhaps than she had ever acknowledged. But how hard it would be to part from Phyllis, whom she had loved and cherished for all these years! And yet she had seen with pleasure the increasing love that Arthur felt for her darling. For she knew that there would be always a corner for her in Arthur's house. It would be a very comfortable house, for Arthur would surely have his uncle Grimshaw's money, and Phyllis herself would not go empty-handed from her dear old Duffie.

And while all this was passing through her head the launch went slowly steaming on, and there opened out a lovely space of green turf, rich and velvety to the very water's edge, with a quaint Elizabethan boat-house, stored with all kinds of craft, a marble staircase and landing-place close by, where a peacock sunned himself on the white balustrade, attended by his glittering harem. Noble trees formed green arcades, and carried the eye among soft folds of grassy glades. Above a thicket of flowering and ornamental shrubs rose the white façade of a house, moderate in size, but handsome without and within, while glass-houses, gardens, tennis-courts, and bowling-greens were bordered by a grove of tall elms, where an ancient colony of rooks kept house among the topmost branches.

The scene would have been pleasant enough in utter solitude and repose, but on this particular afternoon it sparkled with life. Scarlet jackets were seen through the trees, and the melodious strains of a military band fell softly on the ear. White tents were pitched here and there under the trees, and groups of smart people in the smartest and newest of costumes were posed here and there, changing with a gentle movement of arrival and departure. Scores of carriages, no doubt, were drawn up on the dusty road, but many of the guests arrived by water. There were punts in satinwood and mahogany, whose fittings were a triumph of the cabinet-maker's rather than the boat-builder's art, gigs and wherries of the same luxurious appointments, and launchers, both steam and electric, as smart as varnish and gilding could make them; and on the lawn by the river terrace a delightful-looking elderly gentleman, with a lady at his side, much younger, but still of mature years, was welcoming a large party which had just landed, and a



number of young people, who were just pushing off in a punt, were exchanging chaff and badinage with a young man and woman, evidently brother and sister, on the terrace.

"That is Lord Coleworth!" said Mrs. Duffield, catching sight of the elderly gentleman. "Phyllis, that is your grandfather!" she continued, with uncontrollable excitement.

"What a pretty girl!" at the same moment cried Phyllis, whose attention was attracted by the youthful group. At the same time Bryce improved the occasion by letting off a series of ear-splitting shrieks. "I'm afraid our behaviour is rather low," cried Phyllis, as soon as her voice could be heard. "Arthur, have you any string?"

Bryce coloured fiercely, for he could not brook being interfered with, and the gag, as applied to his whistle, he never would endure.

The gay scene on shore had engrossed too much the attention of those on board the "Firefly." They had not seen, and could not have heard, the approach of a huge white launch that was coming down with the stream at tremendous speed, and with an utter want of a look-out ahead. It was an affair of a moment for the big launch to pass over the "Firefly," sending the boat to the bottom of the river with her side stove in, and throwing all her occupants into the water.

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN CHARGE OF LADY DOROTHEA.

COMING gradually and painfully to life, after the strange terror and flurry of drowning, Phyllis was first conscious of a pair of dark, glowing eyes fixed steadily upon her, and as sensation and vague recollection came back to her out of the dread void of oblivion, she recognised that the dark, finely-cut features belonging to the eyes were utterly strange to her.

"Well," said a voice in deep, soft tones, "the soul has returned to its tenement—poor little soul that had almost fluttered away beyond recall! But it obeyed the powerful word of Dr. Sancotta. Yes, she has come back, the teasing little soul with all her tricks—

"Faithless as the wind or seas."

Phyllis sat up astonished. This strange creature's words, his dress as strange as his features, for he wore a long Oriental gown, and a yellow tarbouah was bound round his brows; but his words gave her

the clue that she lacked, and the past sped by at full gallop through her brain. "Where is Duffie?" she cried, the final catastrophe having been recalled.

"Is it the elderly lady, her highness's chief attendant? She is safe; also the chief boatman and the other—what shall we call him?—'Ganem,' the slave of love, perhaps."

There was a mocking playfulness in the tone that Phyllis resented a little. Yet she had evidently been well cared for, and she was reposing wrapped up in blankets and fleecy coverings, in what was evidently the state-room of a river yacht. As she looked about her, there came forward from an inner cabin a handsome Oriental in a jewelled turban and flowing Eastern robes, who fixed his bold black eyes upon Phyllis with an expression that made her shiver. The pair spoke together in some unknown tongue, and the young Oriental passed out.

"He is a care to me, our Rajah," said Dr. Sancotta, with a frown. "It is as if I led a tiger by a string. But I forget, there are those of your friends who are asking for you."

The doctor went to the door of the cabin, and called to some one on shore, and presently a boat came alongside.

A tall, handsome woman entered the cabin, and sat down beside Phyllis, taking her hand in a firm, sympathetic grasp.

"My poor child, you have had a narrow escape, and you must keep quiet, and I will tell you all you want to know. You are on board the Rajah of Kandurga's yacht, who ran you down. She is a great deal too big for these waters, as I told him; but he is a selfish youth, who only cares for his own slothful indulgences. Now that young man of yours is a splendid fellow. My dear, he dived for you time after time, and when he brought you to the bank, he was distracted when you gave no signs of life. But, thanks to Dr. Sancotta, who is the Rajah's private physician—"

"Yes, she is mine," said the doctor. "I gave her life, and she belongs to me."

"I think there will be somebody to dispute your claim," said the other, smiling. "But now, Phyllis, I have something to tell you that is not so satisfactory. Poor Mrs. Duffield is, I am afraid, very ill. The shock at her time of life may have serious consequences. She is well cared for at a cottage on the other side of the river, and she expressed a wish to see Lord Coleworth, and he has gone to her. Oh, I knew Mrs.

Duffield long ago, for I am Dorothea Wynne, of whom, perhaps, you may have heard. And I am going to take charge of you till we know how your nurse is likely to go on."

Phyllis felt the kindness of all this, and was strongly attracted to the firm, capable woman who had now assumed the command. And she breathed more freely when she was clear of the ill-omened yacht, and yet she was grateful to Dr. Sancotta, who was assiduous in helping her to disembark.

"I shall come and see you," he said. "Mind, I am only lending you to this lady."

Lady Dorothea's pony-carriage was brought down to the landing-place, and as the accident had excited a good deal of interest, a number of people gathered about the carriage, among whom Phyllis recognised the pretty girl she had seen on the lawn just before the upset.

"That is Ruby Vyvian," said Lady Dorothea good-humouredly, indicating her with the thong of her whip. "You have to thank her for your outfit, Phyllis. She is a good-natured girl, but she laughs too much and gets too fat."

But where was Arthur all this time? They met him on the road, walking with the venerable Lord Coleworth. They had just come from the cottage, and Arthur's grave face warned Phyllis to prepare for the worst. Dear old Duffie was dead; she had felt that she was dying when she sent for Lord Coleworth. And he, poor man, seemed strangely agitated and overcome. He gazed at Phyllis under his white eyebrows, and seemed as if inclined to address her. But then Dick Vyvian came along and offered the old gentleman his arm, and they walked away together.

Mrs. Duffield's death seemed to bring Phyllis's fortunes to a crisis. She had left no will, and relatives of hers turned up from all quarters to quarrel over and eventually divide her succession. Even Phyllis's piano, bought with her own money, was claimed as a portion of the inheritance. But this Lady Dorothea, who championed Phyllis's cause with her usual energy, succeeded in cutting out as it were from under the enemy's guns. And there was no question after the first of where Phyllis's future home was to be.

"Providence," said Lady Dorothea, "in shutting one door had opened another." It would be her care that Phyllis should be fairly started upon some career that should give her the prospect of an honest

independence. But she would not let off Lady Coleworth a single sixpence of her promised allowance, which had still another year to run.

"Bah!" said Dr. Sancotta, who still continued his visits as physician, although Phyllis declared herself perfectly well. "She shall be dancer, singer, teacher! What good is that? If you cannot do more good than that, I shall take her myself."

Sometimes the Rajah came with his physician, and practised talking English with Phyllis, while he amused himself with exciting her curiosity with wondrous tales of his native land.

Lady Dorothea's riverside cottage was only a little higher up-stream than Coleworth Court, and the two Vyvians were constantly at the Bungalow; and Phyllis found Dick a most amusing companion, and a past master in the art of making time pass pleasantly. And Lord Coleworth would come in sometimes in the afternoon for a cup of tea, and for a chat with Lady Dorothea, and he would sit and furtively regard Phyllis as she busied herself over the tea-cups, with a puzzled, anxious look on his face, although he only talked on casual every-day topics. But once, when everybody happened to be out of the room but my lord and Phyllis, he drew up his chair near to hers.

"Phyllis," he said in a low voice, almost a whisper, "did you ever know a man named Figgins?"

Phyllis was as much astonished as if the teapot had become a petard, and exploded. Yet she thought and thought, and at last she fancied that she connected the name with some unredeemed promise—we rarely forget people, even as children, whom we fancy our debtors—and it occurred to her that she had been promised a "slice of the pyramids" by one Figgins, and had never had it; and the whole scene came back to her, of the tow-row-row of the drums, and the march of the British Grenadiers. And she told Lord Coleworth softly that she believed that there had been such a man in the Grenadier Guards, but that was years and years ago; and Lord Coleworth acknowledged the information, scanty as it was, with great emprossement.

All this time the Indian Rajah was a very constant visitor at the Court, and in high favour with Lady Coleworth. People said that she wanted the Rajah, who was fabulously rich, and whose jewels were worth

a dukedom, for her daughter Ruby; but in truth Lady Coleworth had no ideas of the kind. Her interest in the Rajah was founded on the fact that His Highness's principality was situated on the very frontier where some years before Colonel Coleworth's expedition had come to a disastrous end. And it had been thought that the Rajah himself knew more about the matter than he was at all inclined to avow; and that he had caused sundry quiet, inoffensive tribesmen to be shot and hanged just to propitiate the British Government, while sheltering and even rewarding the real authors of the outrage. Aware of these vague suspicions, which were current only in a very limited circle of those who, if the phrase may be allowed, were "in the know," Lady Coleworth had obtained a considerable influence over the Rajah, who, if he had a tinge of the ferocity, had something more of the cowardice of a tiger. But Lady Coleworth's object was simple enough, and did not revert to these bygone events. The Colonel had been killed, no doubt, and all that Lady Coleworth wanted was some conclusive proof of his death. And this, she put it to the Rajah sweetly, she felt sure he could furnish. The Rajah turned pale under his dusky skin, and gave her ladyship a glance as sharp as the executioner's sword; but he only murmured under his breath that he would make enquiries.

All this time Arthur Gray had fared but badly at the hands of fortune. Phyllis was lost to him; he had no place among the new friends that she had found, and the best service he could render her was to disappear altogether from her sight. His scanty fortunes had fallen to utter ruin. His employers had definitely resolved to dissolve the firm and retire from business. His uncle Grimshaw, enraged at the loss of the "Firefly," and disgusted at his want of success in the general shipping line, had requested him to find a home elsewhere. Bills announcing an auction sale were pasted in the windows of the house in Nightingale Terrace where he had passed so many happy hours with Phyllis. In the City, people he had known in business hurried past him, or addressed him compassionately: "Well, Gray, what are you doing now?" And even if he got once more a foothold on the tread-wheel which was twirling round so merrily, what was there before him but a wearisome struggle, now swimming, now sinking, till he sank to rise no more. In this dismal

mood he reached Charing Cross, where a recruiting sergeant slapped him on the shoulder. Anything was better than going back, and with a feeling that this was the next best thing to suicide, Arthur Gray took his place in the forlorn awkward squad that awaited the army surgeon's arrival by a dingy door in the dingy front of the barracks behind the National Gallery.

"Here he comes! here comes the bloke as 'll punch their ribs!" cried the little knot of onlookers, mostly rejected ones, who crowded at the barrack gate—like Paris at the gates of Paradise—as the doctor hurried in, and the squad of would-be recruits, with a feeble counterfeit of playful smartness, took the word of command from a sergeant and marched in after him.

#### CHAPTER IV. A FLIGHT FROM THE RAJAH.

IF Lady Dorothea had been moved in her championship of Phyllis by certain tender memories, as well as a chivalrous impulse to protect the unprotected of her own sex, these feelings were soon replaced by a strong affection for the object of her care. People of her acquaintance had to take Phyllis on trust, as all the explanation vouchsafed to them was that she was the daughter of an early friend, whom she intended eventually to adopt as her own. Lady Coleworth, for her own sake, was anxious that nothing should be known as to Phyllis's real origin, although she deplored the fatality which had thrown her in Lady Dorothea's way. She had cherished the hope that her own two children would eventually be Lady Dorothea's principal legatees, and she had strong reasons for desiring the return of Phyllis to the obscurity out of which she had so unexpectedly emerged. And it would not displease her to see Phyllis compromise herself in a way to forfeit the protection of Lady Dorothea.

There was the Rajah, now, who was so much fascinated by Phyllis's attractions—if his caste prejudices and the fact that he had left at least one lawful wife behind him in his own dominions—if these considerations precluded any permanently binding connection, surely money could do anything, and a girl like Phyllis, if sufficiently well endowed, would think herself fortunately placed as His Highness's reigning favourite.

These notions Lady Coleworth insinuated into the Rajah's quick percep-

tions, with the additional encouragement that Phyllis was not legally under the guardianship of Lady Dorothea, and that no offence would be committed in removing her from her care. And the result was that the Rajah grew more and more pressing in his attentions to Phyllis, while there was often in his manner to her when alone, a veiled insolence and familiarity that excited her anger and scorn. But his opportunities were few, for Dr. Sancotta was nearly always in close attendance upon him. The Rajah fumed and fretted under this supervision, and it was easy to see that there was no love lost between the pair.

As for Lady Dorothea, she tolerated the Rajah's visits for the sake of Dr. Sancotta's society. Sancotta was a Parsee and a disciple of Zoroaster, as far as he was a disciple at all who professed to be a master and to hold the key to the most recondite secrets of nature. He had captured Lady Dorothea on her visionary side, and had won her faith by the power of his penetrating intellect. "My dear Phyllis," said Lady Dorothea, in a moment of confidence, "that wonderful man has penetrated the mystery of my life!" And Phyllis owned that although Dr. Sancotta was very kind, and seemed to be actuated by the very best motives, yet that he always gave her a creepy sensation when he approached her, while he seemed to read her thoughts as readily as if they were written down for him.

It was on one beautiful autumnal day that Phyllis, taking a little skiff from the boat-house, sculled herself up the stream a little way to where a venerable willow formed a shady nook, sheltered from sun and wind, and making the boat fast to the bole of the tree, she began to skim the pages of the last new novel from Mudie's. As she read the lines became indistinct, for drowsiness had come over her—the lapping of the water, the rustle of the breeze, the cheerful sounds of surrounding life, all combined to lull her to sleep. How long she slept she could not tell, but when she awoke she was surprised to find the skiff in the middle of the river and drifting rapidly down the stream. That she had moored the boat insecurely was her first impression, but when she saw that the scull with which she had manœuvred the boat had been removed, she began to suspect that somebody was playing her a trick. But before she had made up her mind on the subject, her skiff gently came

in contact with the gilded counter of a big white launch, when a dark fellow in a white turban reached out and made fast the wandering craft.

"What a happy chance has brought the lovely queen of the river to the dazzled sight of her humble slave!" said the Rajah, hastening to offer his hand to the young girl. "And now you will bless me by your presence in my humble ship."

But it was no chance at all that had brought her there, but the skilful management of some practised swimmer, who was at this moment landing under some bushes; and the launch was under steam, and at that moment dropped the buoy to which she had been moored and began to descend the river. Yet Phyllis, though vexed, only thought of the matter as a practical joke. She did not see how to get away just then, but at the first lock she could escape. But the Rajah's tone became more imperious and threatening as he saw that she did not intend to accept his invitation.

"You will come on board now in a minute," he cried, and seeing refusal in her face, he gave an order to the dark attendant, who, without more ado, drove a heavy spike through the bottom of the skiff, which at once began to fill and sink, so that Phyllis had no choice but to spring for safety to the side of the launch. In so doing her hat fell off and floated on the water.

"That is well," said the Rajah. "They will find the boat and the hat, and they will say you are dead! But you shall be alive, very much alive, with me."

The Rajah put his arm round Phyllis with an insolent smile, who in return dealt him a stinging blow in the face, which only had the effect of putting him in a violent rage. He called to his attendants to seize the girl and convey her to the cabin.

The launch had begun to move quickly, but a difficult bend of the river made her commander slacken speed; but although the craft was skilfully handled, yet she was held by something in the very middle of the river. In vain the Rajah raged and ground his teeth, but not an inch could the boat be stirred; and now, coming along at a good pace, was seen a boat pulled by two good oars, while in the stern sat Dr. Sancotta, who was waving a red umbrella as a signal. The boat shot up alongside and the doctor leapt on board the launch, which at once began to

move on its course. The dark attendants exchanged awe-struck glances, and the Rajah's gleaming eyes fell before the doctor's burning glance.

"My dear," said the doctor, addressing Phyllis, "I witnessed your accident, and have brought your friends to your aid."

For it was Dick and Ruby who were rowing.

"Why, Phyllis, what a narrow escape you have had!" said Ruby.

"Yes, indeed," replied Phyllis, with a studier.

But they had picked up her hat, and soon regained the skiff, and the lost scull which was also floating down the stream.

People talked for a whole evening of the accident that had befallen Phyllis, and then the matter was forgotten.

But to Lady Dorothea Phyllis told the true version of the affair, and the recital filled her with vivid apprehensions. How to act in the matter so as at once to avoid any scandal or publicity—things which Lady Dorothea dreaded above all things—and at the same time to afford due protection to Phyllis, was a problem that puzzled her completely. In all the emergencies of life she had been accustomed to consult Lord Coleworth. Her oracle was becoming old and infirm, and his wife disseminated the opinion that the old man was in his dotage, but there was plenty of intelligence and judgement behind those shaggy white eyebrows, although craving chiefly to be left in peace and tranquillity.

But it so happened that Lord Coleworth himself wished to consult Lady Dorothea, and came over to see her one morning at a time when he was supposed to be smoking his customary cigar in the shrubbery. Lord Coleworth recalled to Lady Dorothea's remembrance the circumstances attending poor Duffield's death. That good woman had sent for him and imparted to him certain surmises of her own connected with Phyllis's parentage that had greatly surprised him. She had nothing in the way of proof, but she believed that one Figgins had; and with that she ceased to speak coherently and then the end came. The clue was a slender one, but having ascertained that Figgins had been a soldier, Lord Coleworth made enquiries through the War Office, and found that he was still receiving a pension of sixpence a day, and was employed as a porter in the City. Lord Coleworth saw the man, who told the following story. On the eve of the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, when the troops

were formed in the darkness and lying on the sand awaiting the order for the final rush, Figgins was on the right flank of his company, and Captain Coleworth was lying next to him. And just there there was a glare of light from some fires that were burning in the enemy's lines, and in the light of that, the Captain took out his tablets and pencil and began to write. And when he had finished he fastened the writing in an envelope and addressed it. And said he, handing over the letter and a sovereign: "Figgins, if I'm knocked over, send this on; if not, give it me back," and Figgins took the note and stuck it in the lining of his sleeve. Well, Figgins was hit on the arm, and the Captain escaped scot-free, and came to Figgins in the hospital tent. "Where's that note?" said he; and the ambulance men had cut off his sleeve on account of his wounded arm, and had taken no notice of where they put the same. And it was some months after at a rag-shop in Cairo that Figgins recognised his sleeve hanging up, and bought it for a plastre, and tucked up in the cuff of it was the Captain's letter; but by that time the Captain had left the regiment, and Figgins kept the letter, thinking that some day it might be asked for. And meeting Mrs. Duffield, whom he had known when she was at the Tower, he told her about it, and she said: "Keep it till you're asked for it." But when the Captain's father came and said how his son was dead, and looked at the letter, and said he knew the person to whom it was addressed, and as the old gentleman behaved handsomely to Figgins, why, he was welcome to the letter.

"And here it is, my dear," said Lord Coleworth, producing a yellow, discoloured letter addressed to Lady Dorothea Wynne, whose face blanched with emotion as she saw the faded handwriting.

"Ought I to open it?" she asked, looking at Lord Coleworth. "He would have taken it back, you know."

Lord Coleworth hesitated.

"I think Gerald's death alters the case," he said at last. "Yes, open it, certainly."

Lady Dorothea broke open the cover and read the contents of the letter, which consisted only of a few words. At once the pallor on her face was succeeded by a warm glow of colour, which faded and left her face paler than before.

"Thank you," she said in a strained voice, "thank you for bringing me this. It is a message that concerns only me."

Lord Coleworth took up his hat to depart. "There is nothing, Dorothea, in which I can be of service!" Lady Dorothea bethought her of the advice she had been about to seek, in what seemed to her now the far distant past. But everything was different now, a faded scrap of writing had changed it all. No longer she hesitated. In what concerned Phyllis it was for her to decide, and she made up her mind at once. Phyllis must be taken out of the reach of this insolent Rajah and of his fascinating but uncanny physician.

In a general way Bradshaw and a cab are the only essential preliminaries, finance permitting, for a successful evasion. There were half-a-dozen houses in as many different parts of the country where Lady Dorothea would be welcomed with effusion. But then, so would the Rajah. His Highness was in the fashion, and no country house of distinction could miss a visit from the brilliant and popular Prince. Thus, as known to be in His Grace's favour, Lady Dorothea had been applied to by various friends. "Do persuade your Rajah to give us a few days, and his charming physician of whom one hears so much."

But there was the Duke of Ancaster, who detested foreigners, and held the mild Hindoo in especial abhorrence. The Rajah would never get an invitation there. True, the house was a dull one, the Duchess somnolent, the Duke thinking only of his grouse and deer, and surrounded by cronies and toadies of both sexes. And the house, Ogham Castle, not a hundred miles from John o' Groat's, was encompassed by at least a hundred square miles of barren heath and wretched moorland, dignified by the name of forest. That is on the shore side, for the Castle itself lay on a rocky promontory, washed by the wild North Sea, and tall ships might anchor in the bay, with their yard-arms poking into the very windows of the Castle. However, to Ogham Castle she would go with Phyllis, and lest the Rajah should follow them, she would confide her destination to nobody till they were fairly at sea.

And in pursuance of her plans she sent for Dick Vyvian, and gave him carte blanche to hire a commodious steam yacht of about two hundred tons, to be moored off Gravesend on the following Saturday.

"Gravesend," cried Phyllis, when she heard of the proposed cruise; "why not London Docks?" and she carolled the old sailors' shanty:

"To London Docks we bade adieu,  
To lovely Poll, and likewise Sue;  
Our anchor peaked, our sails unfurled,  
We're bound to plough the watery world."

"That is just it," said Lady Dorothea, laughing. "Phyllis, if anybody asks for our address for the next few months, tell them the 'watery world'!"

But Phyllis had certain tender thoughts which turned towards the London Docks with a feeling that none could share. That rugged old playfellow, the Tower, and Grimshaw's wharf; and where was Arthur now, and why didn't he write or send her some sign of his existence?

Lady Dorothea's plans had worked out without a hitch. Dick had secured just the kind of boat she wanted, with an affable captain and pleasant crew. Dick, too, on being invited to ship for the watery world, replied that he would be delighted to go to the end of the world in such company, if he could be assured of being able to join a county football match in the first week of October. Satisfied on this head, he threw over a friend who wanted him to join in sailing a two-ton yacht to "Norroway through the foam," and joined the party at the rendezvous.

"I want you, captain," said Lady Dorothea, as soon as they were all on board, "to sail till you are out of sight of land, and then I shall make up my mind."

"I see, my lady, sealed orders," said the captain, with an irresistible wink that he indulged in even in the most august presence. And Sheerness was passed, where guns were gruffly barking, and shot were raising fountains of spray that caught rainbow tints in the sunshine, and ironclads lay wallowing on the tide; and so past Herne Bay, where batteries of bathing-waggons were drawn up on the beach, with Reculvers' twin towers, and Margate shining on its headland, roofs, and white hotels, and the beach with its gay and busy swarm, the resonance of the band and the faint hum of the multitude falling softly on the ears. But all was still and hushed in the calm of a summer evening, when, out of sight of land, and with only a little fleet of fishing-boats to be seen far or near, the captain came to Lady Dorothea for further instructions.

"Duncansby Head, madam! That is our point, then—and a nasty coast it is with a north-east gale!"

The voyage passed pleasantly and calmly. There was a soft westerly breeze,

and the boat stood close in to the huge cliffs of the northern coast. Scarborough tempted Phyllis and Dick most cruelly, and they begged Lady Dorothea to let the ship lie-to for the night so that they might go ashore,

To tread but one measure, drink one cup of wine.

But Lady Dorothea was inexorable, and the gaunt ruins of Whitby Abbey on the lonely height were passed, and the castled crag of Bamborough, and then no more was seen of England, and not much of Scotland; and as they sailed on, the daylight seemed to draw in rapidly, and the nights were lit up with strange radiance from the northern skies. And with the sea like milk, and perfectly smooth, the boat rounded the dark headland, and opened out the rocky bay where Ogham Castle, with its turrets and battlements, was mirrored in the placid waters. But before them lay the placid firth, here narrowed by islets, and there stretching out indefinitely into the glory of the setting sun, with a coast of dazzling sands and rocky headlands. It was the extreme end of the Isle of Britain.

But out of the glow of the evening sky there came a growing obscurity of thick smoke. A steamer was coming along from the west, full tilt for the Pentland Firth. She slackened speed as she made out the other boat, and as she came abreast of her, stopped altogether. Yes, it was Dr. Sancotta who stood on the bridge and amicably waved his hat to the little group on the rival steamer.

"He is wonderfully guided, the wretch," said Lady Dorothea, "but I think we shall have the best of him. I don't think he will conjure his way into Ogham Castle."

#### CHAPTER V. "GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART."

THERE was nothing formidable about Ogham Castle even for a tyro in fine company. It was just like a big hotel, only with better attendance than usually falls to the lot of the traveller. The dinner was the most formidable function, but on the first evening Phyllis was taken in charge by a good-humoured, talkative, middle-aged Colonel, an old friend of Lady Dorothea's, who made things very pleasant for her. And in the drawing-room there was no time for gène, as the Duchess had a plan in her head which drew all the ladies with eagerness together. It was a secret to be kept from Duke Leofric, who

abhorred everything of the kind, but the Duchess had managed to secure Dr. Sancotta for this one evening, and in her own boudoir, and just among themselves, for half an hour he would show them some wonderful things. The doctor would not appear at the dinner-table, for he preferred to fast before any manifestation of his powers.

"We are in for it now," whispered Lady Dorothea to Phyllis; "we must join the rest, but be careful."

Dr. Sancotta sat at a table reading by the strong light of a shaded lamp, while all the rest of the room was in semi-darkness. He rose and bowed courteously as the bevy of women entered the apartment, and with a magisterial wave of the hand intimated that all must be seated.

"You must not expect," he said, in his firm, melodious tones, "any extraordinary manifestations this evening. The past is within our grasp to recall, the future may be forecast with accuracy, but these by methods which demand long and painful preparation on the part of the neophyte as well as the master, and should be approached in a more solemn spirit than is compatible with a mere casual gathering. But the present is within our reach. All we require is a medium of communication, and the three requisites of such a medium are youth, purity, and a sensitive organisation."

A certain embarrassment was evident among the Duchess's guests, as the searching glance of the doctor passed round the circle.

"Shall I send for some of the young housemaids?" asked the Duchess nervously.

"By no means," said Sancotta. "I see a young lady who perfectly fulfils my conditions, with the addition of charms that recall the 'Phyllis smiling and beguiling' of the old song."

"Amazing!" whispered the Duchess to her neighbour. "He knows everything, you see."

Lady Dorothea's eyes flashed fire, but the doctor met her glance with a look of triumph as Phyllis, trembling, and with pupils dilated, approached the wizard's seat.

"Courage, my dear girl," whispered the doctor, "there is nothing formidable to encounter," and he placed her in a chair with her back to the table and the lamp. "Now," said the doctor, "I want you to think earnestly on somebody you know or knew—a living person preferably. If dead, your task will be more difficult." Phyllis

tried to think of some indifferent person, of Lord Coleworth or old Grimshaw, but do what she would, only one image would fix itself in her mind, and that was of the dear "Paddie" she had known in her youth, the figure associated in her mind with the red coats and black busbies, and the strains of martial music.

"You have thought of some one, I see," said Sancotta, with a smile. "Now hold out your hand." Taking her hand in his, the palm uppermost, he poured into the hollow a few drops of a rose-coloured fluid, and bade her look intently at the liquid globule. As she did so it appeared to increase and swell, till she lost sight of everything else, and in the centre was a dark nucleus, which gradually unfolded till she could make out figures and a landscape, a hillside covered with a thick forest growth, in the centre of which was a kind of stockaded fort, about which a number of dusky-looking warriors were lounging. The gate of the fort opened, and there came slowly limping forth into the open, a man of European features, half hidden in a grizzly beard. His ankles were shackled together by heavy irons, so that he could only walk at a shambling pace, and he was watched and followed by half-a-dozen guards with rifles on their shoulders. He made his way to a seat under a lofty tree, where he had carved his name and a long row of notches, which perhaps represented the months of his captivity.

All this Phyllis had mechanically, and in a low monotone, described to the audience; but as she saw the figure's eyes fixed upon her, and she heard the sigh or groan which escaped from his lips, she could control herself no longer. "It is my father!" she cried, and fell, half fainting, into the arms of Lady Dorothea, who had come to her aid, and stood over her, looking wrathful defiance at Sancotta.

And nothing could assuage Lady Dorothea's indignation or induce her to stay another day at the Castle. She would take Phyllis at once to her own home in Wales, where at least she could be protected from charlatans and adventurers. Poor Phyllis, who was paying the penalty of over-excitement in headache and nervous depression, offered no opposition, and without beat of drum Lady Dorothea re-embarked her party, and gave sailing orders for the coast of Wales, to run within the stormy Hebrides. This had been the disastrous sea route of the defeated Ar-

mada; but for Lady Dorothea it would be a kind of triumphal progress.

But the progress was not so smooth as before. For although the weather was calm, a heavy ground-swell had set in from the Atlantic, great glassy waves coming on in oily smoothness to break with a thundering roar and in sheets of foam on the rocky coast. Cape Wrath was wreathed in clouds of spray, through which it loomed as dark and sinister as its name, and the tide was pouring down the Minch in whirls and eddies that made Scylla and Charybdis appear probable. For there were rocks, too, in abundance, jagged fangs and treacherous reefs, and but for catching a highland pilot and making him take charge of the ship, the captain would have put about the boat and gone back the way he came. Then they ran into smoother water, and found the straits by Lochalsh as placid as an inland lake. But the Atlantic surges caught them as they passed between the strange island peaks of Rum and Elgg, and it blew something like a gale off Ardnamurchan Point. And Staffa, with its wondrous columns, was white with sea foam, while Iona and her dark low ruins seemed all awash with the great rolling billows. There was nothing after this but howling winds and driving rain, while rocky isles and bare gloomy promontories were seen to pass like a vision. The Irish coast loomed on one hand; in a gleam of misty light the rugged Mull o' Galloway was seen on the other. A dark, shadow-like pinnacle, dimly seen in the shades of evening, was said to be the "Calf of Man," and after that all was oblivion, till a lovely morning broke in perfect peace and stillness as the boat lay at anchor in the Menai Straits, with their green shore and their pleasant towns, their huge bridges, and their happy, "riant" aspect.

With the clatter of Welsh tongues as they landed, Phyllis imagined herself in a foreign land. But Lady Dorothea was familiar with it all, and had a Welsh greeting for one or the other. Now it would be an old market-woman who would seize her by the hand and pour out a torrent of Welsh civilities; or an old farmer in a white peaked hat would, bar the passage, gesticulating in what seemed to Phyllis a violent rage, but which was only a friendly welcome to the land of the Cymry.

There was a drive of eight miles or so to Bryndinas, a gradual ascent nearly all



the way, with a mountain torrent roaring below, and rills, and brooks, and foaming falls making a pleasant murmur on every side. And the hills were more rugged and broken the further one went, and over the rocky pastures showed the purple flank of a huge precipice, and the ridge of a mountain summit showed against the sky. But Nature had softened her mood when she hollowed out the vale that was spread out beneath the rude crest of Bryndinas. There were traces of a rude fort on the hill that had once been the stronghold of the chief of the tribe, but the house that had taken its name therefrom was in the valley, a grey and venerable mansion, set in the greenest of sward, with massive oaks grouped here and there about it, and a deep, dark background in the firs that clothed the hill behind it. And it was strange in the deep solitude and silence to hear the clock from the stable turret chime forth the hour, and the scream of the peacock that followed.

"It is an enchanted palace," cried Phyllis, as the carriage stopped at the lodge gate, a mile away from the house.

"I love the place," said Lady Dorothea; "but I love it best at a distance, for I always come to it with something like reluctance. There are places too deeply charged with memories; but you, Phyllis, must bring in the charm of the present."

Life at Bryndinas passed pleasantly enough. Visiting neighbours were few and at long distances apart, and the great house of the district was closed to the dwellers at Bryndinas; for the first news that greeted them on their arrival was that Lord Oldfield was entertaining a large party at Penarth, and that among the guests was an Indian Prince who went about all spangled with diamonds.

There was no getting out of the Rajah's radius, that was evident; but as he made no attempt upon the privacy of Bryndinas, it seemed probable that his visit was a coincidence merely, and Lady Dorothea began to relax her anxious watch over Phyllis; and Gelert, the great wolf-dog, was a sufficient protection to that young lady in her walks abroad and also in her drives, for a strong attachment had sprung up between the two, and after his first introduction to "Phyllis, smiling and beguiling," the poor dog would follow nobody else.

And Phyllis one day, with Gelert in attendance, had driven over to the station, some five miles distant, to fetch a box of

books from Mudie's; and she was about to drive back the way she came, when she heard the sound of martial music and the tramp of many feet. "Indeed it is the soldiers marching through the town," said the station-master, the town consisting of half-a-dozen thatched cottages, and an inn called the "Cross Foxes," upon the old Holyhead Road. Phyllis thought she would like to see them pass, and drove on to the cross roads. A good many people had gathered to see the soldiers pass, and Welsh greetings of all kinds rent the air. For these were the Cambrian Rangers, the very regiment that had relieved the Guards at the Tower in the old days; and there were a good many Welshmen among the rank and file, and they were marching from Wrexham to join a transport steamer at Holyhead. The white goat with the long beard marched in front with as much dignity as the drum-major, while Bran, the wolf-hound, whose acquaintance Phyllis had made in the Tower, and who was a near relative of Gelert's, ran from one to the other of the companies. When the regiment had gone by, Phyllis was about to drive away, when she saw that the regimental baggage had still to pass, three or four transport carts, drawn by mules, with a baggage guard of a corporal and two men. These had more than their share of the dust and heat of the march, and looked fagged and thirsty. And a woman at a cottage door brought out a great brown pitcher of water, and called out in Welsh to them to come and drink. They understood the gesture, anyhow, and ran eagerly across, the Corporal making his men drink first. As the young Corporal lifted up his face from the pitcher, Phyllis recognised him; he was Arthur Gray. She called out his name.

"Phyllis," he cried hoarsely, "good-bye. God bless you! I must not stay," and he and his men doubled after the baggage waggons, which had gone a good way ahead.

#### CHAPTER VI. A TIGER ON THE TRACK.

A YEAR or more had elapsed since Arthur Gray had disappeared in the dust of the Holyhead Road, and Phyllis had heard nothing more of him except that the regiment had arrived in India, and had been sent up the country. As for Lady Dorothea and Phyllis, they had been moving here and there, at Mentone in the spring, in London in the summer, and they

had returned to Bryndinas for the autumn. The Rajah had perseveringly followed their course, and he had lost no opportunity of meeting Phyllis, but his demeanour was irreproachable, and without shutting Phyllis up altogether, Lady Dorothea saw no way of entirely evading his attentions. And Dr. Sancotta was not far off whenever the Rajah was at hand, and Phyllis was far too fond, so thought Lady Dorothea, of talking with that enigmatic but fascinating personage. But he was in such general demand in society that Phyllis was thought fortunate in being able to secure such a share of his attention. But Phyllis was chiefly anxious to elicit from the doctor some explanation of the vision she had seen or imagined under his influence. For the scene haunted her, and in her dreams she saw the captive loaded with chains and always he looked up at her with the same sorrowful, half reproachful gaze. But Sancotta declared that he knew nothing of the scene or the person. He had heard, certainly, of a Coleworth sahib who had been killed by the hillmen, but he had no concern for the "sahibs." He had the Rajah to look after, and that was enough for him—too much at times.

"But why do you devote yourself to the Rajah," asked Phyllis, "when you don't really like him?"

"Because," said Sancotta gravely, "I am commissioned by a higher power to regenerate, if possible, a man whose life affects the welfare of myriads of human beings."

"And if it is not possible?" said Phyllis.

Sancotta made a gesture with his hand as if he had brushed away a fly from his sleeve. Phyllis shuddered, for she had implicit faith in Dr. Sancotta's power.

It was at a brilliant reception in the Duke of Ancaster's grand Belgravian mansion that Phyllis next saw the Rajah. She had been talking to the venerable Lord Coleworth just before. Only a few commonplace remarks had been exchanged, for Lady Coleworth was in waiting and hurried him off to speak to somebody else. Then Phyllis saw that the seat next to her was occupied by the Rajah.

"Listen, sweet Phyllis," he said, with a charming smile. "I have thought of a so good way of softening your obdurate heart, and making it respond to my affection. You shall say to me, beloved one, I will that you shall make ready for me a beautiful house, an earthly paradise where we

shall live and love to the end of our days. And I so joyful send a little word by telegraph; it travels across India, and one who just then was in chains, is now free to walk here and there, and at night instead of a dungeon he sleeps in a beautiful pavilion."

Phyllis looked at the Rajah with sudden, intense interest. He was speaking of her father, who was in some way in his power.

"And when we are together, sweet, in our paradise—shall it be in Italy?—yes—I will never go back to India. If I have wives, there they shall stay, they shall never trouble you; and then the prisoner shall come free, he shall close the old father's eyes, and turn the old rancee out of doors."

"And if I decline this peculiar paradise?" asked Phyllis, with curling lip.

"Still there will go beneath the seas the little word, and where there were chains on the feet there shall be chains on the hands also, and a weight that no man can lift; and if my beloved is still cruel another word shall go, and they shall take irons and put out his eyes; and another word, and they shall tear his flesh with pincers."

The Rajah's words came fast and thick, his eyes gleamed, drops of foam trickled from his lips.

"Cruel wretch," cried Phyllis, "I will denounce you; you shall suffer for this."

The Rajah threw himself back in his chair, and laughed softly in a sudden change of mood. "And how people will laugh," he cried, "and they will say how capitally the Rajah draws the long bow!"

And, indeed, all people to whom Phyllis spoke treated her story as an amusing invention, or if impressed by her serious, eager manner, they decided that the poor girl was suffering from the hallucination of overwrought nerves. And yet poor Phyllis's efforts were not entirely without result. The story she told reached the ears of a high official, who had all along had his doubts about the Rajah. And concurrently with a private telegram from His Highness, "More rupees," an official one of greater length suggested that the Home Government would not be ill-pleased if an expedition were organised to chastise those hill tribes who had been giving trouble lately, and to clear up more conclusively the fate of Colonel Coleworth. And the result was that a wing of an English regiment and a number of Ghoorkas were detached for this service, and the

wing in question happened to be the half-battalion of the Cambrian Rangers in which one Arthur Gray was sergeant.

#### CHAPTER VII. IN THE RANKS OF DEATH.

THE little border war that had burst out on the frontiers of Kandurga had hitherto produced no definite result. There had been much desultory fighting, and wherever the enemy had made a stand he had been dispersed; but he had gathered again at a respectful distance, and to follow him further in a wild and mountainous country, where regular troops were at a certain disadvantage, seemed to be only to invite disaster. And the scene of the catastrophe of the Coleworth expedition, some four or five years before, had been reached, and the neighbourhood carefully examined, but there was nothing discovered that could throw any light upon the fate of its chief. But some peaceful villagers who had remained in their habitations, and had realised small fortunes in the sale of eggs, and milk, and vegetables to the invaders, had vague information to give that a certain white man had been seen in a place fifteen or twenty miles distant, the way to which was over an almost inaccessible mountain pass. It would be absurd to risk the safety of the force in such a region, but a small party of picked men might march out and reconnoitre the region and be back in the camp before the hillmen had time to muster in any force. The Cambrians had distinguished themselves by their marching capacity as well as by their steadiness under fire, and the best marching and the steadiest company in the battalion was number five, in which Arthur Gray was sergeant; and number five accordingly was chosen for the business.

The start had been made in the small hours of the morning, and in darkness and silence the little column had stumbled along through the intricacies of a forest path in the footsteps of a native guide. Then there was a halt till sufficient daylight appeared to show the way across a dangerous mountain ridge, and they reached the summit of the pass before the fiery heat of the day had fairly commenced. Stretched before them was a wild forest region, vast and desolate, bounded by the distant snow-covered mountains of Thibet.

The men had three days' provisions in their haversacks, but it was forbidden to

light fires lest the smoke should alarm the enemy, although there was no appearance of any human creature being in the neighbourhood—no dwellings, or smoke from household hearths, no roads or foot-tracks winding here and there—nothing, in fact, but the wildest solitude and deepest tranquillity. Towards evening they began the descent of the pass, and they had passed over the most dangerous part of the ground while daylight still lasted, and they bivouacked in the dry bed of a torrent in darkness and silence, as far as there could be silence among so many men encamped in such an uncomfortable manner. In the early morning when they should have resumed their march, it was discovered that the native guide had vanished. He had wriggled his way among the rocks unheard and unseen. The occurrence involved a council of war between the Captain and his sergeants. "Let us push on at daybreak," was the general advice. "If we are betrayed, it is too late to retreat." A council of war, they say, never fights, but this one was full of fighting.

But when the sun rose upon the scene and day began with a rush, it became evident that the little column was already surrounded by enemies. The first man who climbed out of the nullah had a bullet sent through his toupee, and the Captain, who had gone forward to reconnoitre, fell dead into the arms of Sergeant Gray. The young Lieutenant, a handsome lad who had recently joined, was shot in the shoulder. At once it was evident that the nullah was commanded by a wooded knoll from which puffs of smoke darted in quick succession, while bullets were humming all round, flattening themselves on the rocks or scattering splashes of lead over the bivouac. "Lads, we've got to clear them out of that," cried Gray; "follow me." He had thrown aside his rifle and buckled on the Captain's sword; and waving the steel, he headed the swift rush across the open, where two or three bit the dust, and up the steep hillside and through the tough breastwork of mud and brushwood. The hillmen ran before the fierce white faces that stormed in upon them, but those who were overtaken turned fiercely upon their foes, and died like wild cats, fighting to the last.

Leaving half-a-dozen men to hold the knoll and look after the wounded, Gray drew out the rest of the column in open skirmishing order, in full pursuit of the

fugitives who were making for the forest; and as these last instinctively crowded together in their flight they offered a better mark to the rifles of the pursuers, while the steady fire that rolled along the line seemed to give an assurance of victory. And there was no stand made in the forest, which was open and free from underwood.

It almost seemed as if they had done enough, as the soldiers, panting and wild with excitement, reached the edge of an open glade whose grassy sides sloped down to a crystal running stream. The men ran wildly down to quench their burning thirst, while Gray, with all the responsibilities of command on his shoulders, carefully studied the position. Perhaps the panic they had created might secure for them a safe retreat over that awful pass; but the sight of their enemy in retreat would instil renewed courage into the hearts of the tribesmen, and with such a swarm there surely must be a hive somewhere near at hand. There was a well-used track that led somewhere, and Gray cautiously pursued the track; but the first object he saw was a rustic seat, which was so English and familiar in appearance that he rubbed his eyes, thinking that he did not see aright. And along the seat was carved in large letters "Gerald Coleworth," and an arabesque of notches surrounded the inscription.

The quick induction followed that here was Phyllis's father, probably still alive, and that his prison must be in the immediate neighbourhood. Signalling silence and caution to his men, he spread them through the wood so as to surround any building there might be within, and himself followed the track from the seat, a track which, though deeply worn, was now partly covered with freshly sprung grass, as if the prisoner had for some while ceased his daily walk; but still the track was plain enough, and ended in a wide circular clearing, in the centre of which rose a circular stockaded fort, surrounded by a deep ditch and glacis.

After a successful tussle men fancy they can do anything. The Cambrians had their blood up, and as the word went round, "Rush the blessed stockade," a cheer rent the air and pell-mell they went at it, while a withering fire from every loophole wreathed the old fort in smoke. But before the smoke cleared away the fort was taken. Arthur was the first in, and chucked the swarthy chief of the band

into the ditch, while he cut down next moment a turbaned executioner, who was about to despatch a heavily ironed prisoner. But next moment he came heavily to the ground; a flying tribesman's parting shot had found a worthy billet.

#### CHAPTER VIII. IN CAPTIVITY.

No one was better informed of what passed in near or further India than the Rajah of Kandurga, and long before the general public or even the official world knew of the gallant deed of Arthur Gray and number five company, the Rajah was in full possession of all the details: Colonel Coleworth set free and coming to England; Sergeant Gray badly wounded, but still living. This intelligence was of terrible significance to him for reasons which must now be made clear.

When Colonel Coleworth passed through Kandurga on his way to the hills, he was charged with a secret mission from the Governor-General, to ascertain what grounds there were for the reports that had reached head-quarters of the crimes and cruelties of which the young Rajah had been guilty. The Colonel found that there was ample proof of the worst that had been alleged against him, and in a confidential despatch he recommended that the Rajah should be deposed and brought to trial. But the despatch never reached its destination, having been intercepted by the Rajah's retainers; and the Rajah, having perused it, determined on suppressing both the despatch and its author. It was not difficult to arrange with a neighbouring chief that the Colonel's party should be attacked and effaced. That the Colonel himself was not killed, but detained as a prisoner, was the result of the chief's subtle policy, who saw in him a means of keeping the Rajah up to his promises.

But with Colonel Coleworth's liberation all was at an end for him. He would be tried, he, the proud descendant of a sacred race, would be tried by these low white-faced traders, and if he escaped an ignominious death would probably be sent to herd with the lowest criminals in the Andaman Islands.

Yet there was still time to escape; Russia would surely give him an asylum, if only for the sake of his influence with the border tribes. Or in America, perhaps, he would be safe. Anyhow, he must get out of English jurisdiction. His yacht was lying at Holyhead; in an hour he

could be on board of her, for the Rajah was now residing in a pretty marine villa on the Menai Straits. And what a triumph, what a grateful revenge, could he carry off his enemy's daughter—obscure the triumph of his release by the intelligence of his child's disgrace! Ah, yes, the Rajah was himself again, supreme above all laws, either human or divine.

But one consideration troubled him. His enormous revenues were now derived altogether from India, and the Government would put its claw on everything. It would be a sorry thing to show himself a ruined, bankrupt Rajah, begging for bread as well as for protection. Every one would put him to the door. Then he remembered some words his father, the old Rajah, had said to him on his death-bed: "Son, in extremity seek the good physician." That meant Sancotta. Let Sancotta appear.

Sancotta did appear at the moment, and the Rajah explained his case.

Said Sancotta:

"Your Highness, it is true your father, the good Rajah, during his lifetime entrusted a considerable treasure into my hands, so that should you ever be in dire need, as from his knowledge of your character he feared you might be, I might relieve your wants. But at my own disposal, and if I thought you unworthy, then to give it to some one more deserving. But I am not disposed to refuse you. How much will meet your present necessities?"

"About ten thousand pounds," replied the Rajah, with a scowl.

"I must go to London for the money," said the doctor. "But I will be here with it to-morrow evening."

The Rajah nodded assent and the doctor departed. Now could the Rajah arrange his plans. He called to his two chief attendants and gave them certain directions, and they retired assuring him that everything should be done as he wished. Then the Rajah departed to go on board his yacht, determined not to spend another night on English soil.

Lady Dorothea and Phyllis were now staying at Bryndinas, and on the following morning the former received a telegraphic message to the effect that Lord Coleworth was in a dying state at Coleworth Court, and desired especially to see her. Lady Dorothea went off with much concern, and just half an hour after she had left, and before her carriage had returned from the station, a closed carriage drove up at a

rapid pace with a railway porter on the box. Lady Dorothea had been taken suddenly ill at the station, and Phyllis was to join her immediately—and not to bring the dog. Phyllis was too much alarmed to make any demur, and poor Gelert was shut up in the stable, and away went the fly. But not towards the station. Before long Phyllis noticed that the road was strange to her and called to the driver to stop, but he only drove the faster. But when Phyllis let down the glasses, and began to scream for help, although the road was lonely as the grave, the carriage did stop, and an ugly but powerful virago jumped inside.

"Now, miss, if you don't hold your row you'll be made to; no harm's meant, and you're with good friends all the time."

In an hour's time the carriage stopped, and close to the seashore where there was a landing-place on a sandy beach, and a half-ruined tower called Porthmawr, which the Rajah had repaired and sometimes used as a summer-house. There was no creature near except seagulls, and Phyllis was obliged to submit to physical force, and was carried into a gaudily furnished room, with a window overlooking the sea but guarded by iron bars.

"You'll not be here long alone," said the hag, with a horrible leer. And here was Andromeda chained to her rock, but with no Perseus at hand; at least, she looked for him in vain on land and sea.

#### CHAPTER IX. THE RAJAH'S FATE.

"THE best-laid schemes of mice or men gang aft agley," and if it were not so, what chance would there be for honest creatures who have no tricks up their sleeve? At the very first junction at which Lady Dorothea stopped she saw Lord Coleworth on the opposite platform, evidently waiting for a train in her direction.

"You are coming to see me; very well, I will go back with you," was her quiet greeting; but she felt terribly frightened, for she saw that she had been the victim of a plot, and she feared that the Rajah had found her off her guard. She scarcely understood a word of what Lord Coleworth said to her, and made the flyman drive at a furious pace from the station. And then to find that her fears had been realised, and Phyllis gone! Her agitation was quite incomprehensible to those about her, and it was only increased when she heard Gelert barking in the stables.

And then Lord Coleworth, who kept his tranquil mien through all the excitement that Lady Dorothea diffused about her, made the pregnant suggestion: "If the dog follows Phyllis generally, he will follow her now."

And Lady Dorothea ordered a groom to put her saddle on the fastest horse in the stable, and to let Gelert loose. And the dog bounded out, and making a cast here and there in the gravel, at last darted off in the direction of the coast, and Lady Dorothea after him, and a couple of grooms riding hard in her train. And the good dog led the chase over stock and stone, till he brought them all to the tower at Porthmawr, where he flew up towards the window in the high tower. And just then there was a cloud of smoke to be seen, and a big steam yacht showed its nose round the adjoining promontory. Lady Dorothea sprang from her horse, and finding the door of the tower fast locked, she bade her men take up the spar of a wreck that was lying on the beach and use it as a battering-ram. But at that moment the attention of all was attracted by a strange turmoil on board the yacht. The Rajah's voice could be heard screaming with rage, shots followed, and then a man was seen to leap from the deck of the ship, and to rise at some distance and strike for the shore. But a shower of bullets followed him, and lashed the water into foam about him. And then the ship itself seemed to rise from the waves, and with a roar that shook both earth and sea, masts, spars, funnel, and a thick cloud of objects of all kinds were hurled upwards, and a white pall of smoke hid everything else from view.

It was awful to see the great white smoke-cloud creeping over the sea, and to think of all the lives that had gasped their last into its fumes. It seemed to follow the form of the swimmer, and to hang about him like an aureole. But he reached the shore at last, and then it was seen that he was Sancotta.

By this time Phyllis was released from her dungeon, and she came to where he was lying panting on the sands, for he would let no one touch him.

"Phyllis," he said, "my art avails me no longer. I have loved you well, and now I leave you all that I possess. Draw the ring from my finger; press the spring——"

He could speak no more, and presently expired; and thus was lost every chance of fully explaining the meaning of the

last strange scene of his existence. But before many hours were over the waves had washed ashore the blackened, discoloured body of the Rajah, whose features still bore the impression of the rage and hate that had characterised his last moments.

#### CHAPTER X. THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

LORD COLEWORTH'S sudden visit to Bryndinas had been prompted by the receipt of a telegram from India, in the name of his son Gerald, announcing his liberation and his speedy return. The news had not afforded unmixed gratification at the Court. Lady Coleworth declared that the whole affair was a fraud, and that if this supposed stepson of hers was received at the house, she would quit it at once with her children. And the poor old man, at his wits' end, had come to Lady Dorothea for advice. All the old lord's explanations had fallen upon deaf ears; but now that Phyllis was safe, and as her cheerful voice and song announced, in no danger of suffering from the shock of her late adventure, there was time to attend to the rest.

In the meantime, the news of the "gallant affair on the frontier" had become generally known. The morning papers extolled the gallant deed of the sergeant lad, who, with a handful of men, had dispersed an important rising, and in capturing an important position had rescued a distinguished officer from a cruel captivity. Phyllis flew into the drawing-room, where the elders were discussing the situation, with eyes aflame and brandishing the news sheet in her hand. "It is Arthur, my Arthur, who has done all this!" and she flung herself upon Lady Dorothea's neck in a passion of tears.

"Poor children!" said Lady Dorothea, when she had kissed and soothed poor Phyllis to her heart's content. "It is a pity they can't live upon glory. But," turning to Lord Coleworth, "after these published details, surely you can't doubt that it is really Gerald?"

No, personally, Lord Coleworth had no doubts, at least next to none.

Just then an Indian telegram arrived for Lady Dorothea.

"Yes, it is Gerald himself; read that," she cried, when she had perused it.

Lord Coleworth read it carefully, short as it was. "'Coming back to claim my own.' What can he mean by that?"

"Do you remember," asked Lady Dorothea in her turn, "bringing me a letter preserved by one Figgins? You shall see it now."

From a locked desk she produced the discoloured scrap of paper.

"Dear wife, Phyllis is our child; take care of her.—G."

The old lord looked up in wild astonishment.

"What, married, you two?"

"Yes; married and parted; we were young, and very foolish, and very much in love."

"But the deceit," cried the old lord, "the long course of deception! Dorothea, it is unpardonable. I can never forgive it, and it absolves me of all obligations towards Gerald!"

"The old rock," cried Lady Dorothea, turning to Phyllis, who had been an astonished listener during the interview. "True as steel, and as hard. My father was just such another. Hence I deceived him. But, oh, Phyllis, can I regret it when it has brought you to brighten my life? Phyllis darling, come here and put your arms round me and call me mother!"

The Calais boat was late one afternoon, the mails being heavy, and a large contingent of passengers from the P. and O. steamer having come across via Brindisi. There was something of a crowd, too, on the harbour jetty awaiting the arrival of the boat, the smoke of which was even now trailing over the blue sea. Phyllis had a seat in the reserved part of the structure, and was alone, for Lady Dorothea at the moment was interviewing the railway authorities about a special carriage for her party. For Colonel Coleworth and Arthur Gray were to arrive together by the boat, Mr. Gray having already been gazetted to a commission for distinguished services in the field. Lord Coleworth was also on the pier, but after saluting the others gravely he had taken no further notice of them.

And Phyllis was horribly nervous at the approaching meeting. Perhaps Arthur would be changed—and then it would be so strange to meet on such a footing. For Lady Dorothea had decided that Arthur must be received simply as a guest, honoured and distinguished, but nothing more. And although it was very nice to have people belonging to you, it is not so nice, perhaps, to realise that you belong to them and are very much at their disposal. And oh, thought Phyllis, how I

wish I had something of my very own that I could share with Arthur!

Then her eyes fell upon poor Sancotta's ring, which she had worn on her middle finger ever since his death. There was a fine ruby in it, but that was not a fortune; and the doctor had said something about touching a spring, but no spring could she discover. And Phyllis began to rub and polish the ring with the inside of her glove, when suddenly she saw an elderly gentleman at her side. He was thin and rather sour-looking, and Phyllis was sure she had seen him in earlier days, but could not recall when or where.

"Pardon me," said the stranger, "but the sight of your beautiful ring recalls a very old friend."

"Dr. Sancotta!" queried Phyllis, feeling a sudden interest in the conversation.

"The same," rejoined the other; "and from seeing the ring on your finger, I fear that its former owner is no more."

"He is dead," replied Phyllis softly, "and in dying he gave me this ring."

"I was led to expect something of the kind," said the other gravely. "But did he give you no instructions?"

"Only to press a spring, and I can find none."

"May I try?" said the old man kindly. And no sooner was it in his hands than a little valve flew open, and a minute roll of something like paper fell upon Phyllis's lap.

The other carefully unrolled it, and laid the minute oblong slip on Phyllis's palm, placing in the other hand a magnifying-glass.

"Read it, please."

Phyllis read: "Deposited with me, to the order of Dr. Sancotta, thirty-one bales of treasure, as per manifest.—Signed, J. GRIMSHAW." While across the document was written: "Transfer to Phyllis.—Signed, SANCOTTA."

"And you are Uncle Grim!" cried Phyllis, now recalling the old gentleman's tournure.

"Not so grim, perhaps, as I look," retorted Mr. Grimshaw sharply. "And you are Phyllis. My dear, shall I tell you how much I hold of yours?"

"Will there be enough for us, both for Arthur and me?"

"My dear, you will be rich; and as for Arthur, he is not my nephew for nothing. After all, I am proud of the boy, and perhaps he would not have done so well in the City."

Then the bell rang, the gong sounded, whistles shrieked, and the Calais boat ran in, its deck and paddle-boxes crowded with passengers and luggage.

"There he is! There's Gray!" cried some soldiers in undress from the garrison. "Three cheers for Gray!"

The cheers were given with a will. Old Grimshaw joined, and Lord Coleworth waved his hat. Phyllis's heart beat violently, and then she was seized by the shoulders, and saw a worn, grizzled face bending down to kiss her.

"It is Paddie, dear Paddie!"

"Where's your mother, child?" cried the Colonel eagerly. "Oh, I see her," and passed on.

There was no time to arrange the question of Arthur's reception; he settled the point himself by seizing Phyllis in his arms and kissing her with quite fanatic ardour.

"Oh, Arthur, don't smother me!" cried Phyllis, half laughing and half crying. "And let me speak to Paddie."

"Oh, he is all right," cried Arthur. "Don't leave me, but let me make sure that you are my own dear girl. For 'Phyllis is my only joy.'"

## AUTUMN LEAVES.

### THE "SHIP" AT SHELLBEACH.

SHELLBEACH was not a fashionable watering-place, neither was the "Ship" a fashionable hotel; all the same, Gerald Waring on his arrival was charmed with the appearance of both. He had desired complete rest and change, together with the recuperative qualities of a bracing air, and had been recommended to try Shellbeach. The "Ship," too, appeared a good old fashioned comfortable type of seaside hostelry, standing, as it did, a little back from what the inhabitants were wont to refer to proudly as the Marine Parade, and not far from a somewhat elementary pier.

It was a long, low, plastered building, with roomy bay windows and an unassuming entrance approached by a couple of shallow stone steps, and at that particular hour of the afternoon there was an atmosphere of drowsiness about the whole that was far from unattractive to the traveller.

At first there appeared to be no one about as, bag in hand, he crossed the threshold. Coming in out of the sunshine

he, for a moment, experienced some difficulty in distinguishing objects, and was considering what means he had best take to signalise his arrival when, as his eyes began to accustom themselves to the semi-gloom of the interior, he made out the figure of a man asleep in a chair in the dark corner under the stairs.

He was a waiter by his dress, and it was not without some compunction that Waring decided to disturb his slumbers.

"Shows they can't have many stopping in the house," was his impression, as he administered a slight but effectual shake.

The man started to his feet with a scared look upon his face, and for a second or two gaped at Waring speechlessly. The latter was attired in a dark navy blue suit, and wore a travelling-cap with a peak.

"Poor beggar!" he thought, as he observed the almost panic-stricken expression which for an instant distorted the man's face. "I suppose he's afraid of my reporting the fact of his being caught napping."

Consequently it was in his most genial and reassuring tone that he made enquiry as to the necessary accommodation.

"I beg pardon, sir," was the waiter's exculpatory remark, "but just for the moment I took you for some one else."

Then he went on to answer glibly the questions put to him. Oh, yes, the gentleman could have rooms. There was no lack of accommodation at the "Ship" just at present. There never was much doing in October. In fact the staff was always reduced to the smallest possible dimensions, and they took things pretty easy, which accounted for his being caught in the very act of taking forty winks.

"You see, sir," he added, "it's what you might call the dead season. Oh, lor!"

Again that scared look upon the man's face as he pulled himself up sharply.

Waring had his choice of half-a-dozen bedrooms, and chose a corner room which had one window with a view of the sea, and another looking upon a large paved, sleepy-looking stable-yard, in which there appeared to be nothing awake or animate save a large sandy cat, which was sunning itself on a doorstep.

He took his dinner in the coffee-room, which he had almost to himself—a couple of young men at an adjacent table being the only others present, and they, as he discovered by their conversation, were on a pedestrian tour and were only stopping one night. They talked largely, possibly



with the view of impressing their auditor, of the distance they had already covered; but Waring paid little attention to them, being chiefly occupied in discussing a very good dinner under the superintendence of the nervous waiter. His seat faced the door. Once during the meal it was pushed open, and the head of the sandy cat appeared.

"Shoo, you beast! Get out!" cried the waiter, flapping at it with a table-napkin.

The cat spat at him and vanished.

When Waring went upstairs to his room that night he saw the same cat sitting outside a door some way down the passage.

A week went by and still Waring found himself practically the only visitor at the "Ship." He and the nervous waiter and the sandy cat seemed to have the place pretty well to themselves. By-the-bye, there were two circumstances in connection with this last couple that may be worth mentioning. The first was the reciprocal ill-feeling that existed between man and beast; and the other, the daily increasing nervousness on the part of Joseph, the said waiter. He had a habit of starting violently at nothing, which had a deleterious effect upon the hotel crockery, combined with a certain air of furtive and timorous expectancy.

"I seem likely to be your only visitor for the remainder of my stay," observed Waring on one occasion.

"I only hope you may be, sir," was the fervent reply, as the man wiped his forehead, which had an unpleasant habit of breaking into a perspiration without apparent cause.

"Queer chap!" thought Waring. "However, the fewer the visitors of course the lighter the work."

"At the same time," he continued aloud, "a fresh arrival would make things a little more lively."

"Miau!" in a strident feline voice without.

"Drat the beast!" from the waiter. "If I don't believe it understands every word that's said."

"You don't seem to like cats?"

"I don't mind 'em in general, sir, but this one I can't abide, no more can any one else, and I never knew it to take but to one person."

"Then I wonder you don't get rid of it," indifferently.

The man shook his head gloomily as he answered:

"We don't dare. There's no knowing how he might take it."

"Who's he?" asked Waring.

The waiter started and dropped the lid of a vegetable dish, which fortunately escaped with only a slight chip, and his face was beaded with perspiration as he stammered:

"I—that is—well, you see, sir, the cat's an old cat, and it might lead from bad to worse."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I hardly know, sir," dropping a tablespoon.

The landlord of the "Ship" owned a second hotel at another watering-place about ten miles off, and alternated between the two.

Waring gathered from something the waiter said that he rather avoided Shell-beach during the autumn months, only driving over about once a week on a visit of inspection. It was on one of these occasions that the former overheard him speaking to Joseph outside the coffee-room door.

"Then it's all right up till now!"

"Up till now, sir. But then you must remember he's hardly due yet. It's generally about the last week in October that——"

"I know, I know. Well, there's nothing to be gained by anticipating matters, and, anyhow, you must remember that all of you who stay on get double wages."

"It's worth it, sir. In fact there are times when I feel as though I must cut and run like the rest."

"Nonsense! Why, you ought to have got pretty well used to it by this time."

There was an evident disclaimer from Joseph, which was interrupted by the sharp enquiry:

"By-the-bye, how about the cat?"

"Oh, it's going on just the same as usual. Sits outside the door nearly all day long and sleeps on the mat at night, which it's my opinion it ain't a cat at all, but——"

"Well, I must be off, but I shall be over again early next week."

No answer but a lugubrious sigh, followed by the rattle of wheels.

Altogether a queer, mystifying fragment of conversation, which, recurring to the mind of the hearer late that night, was the reason of his taking the trouble to walk some yards down the passage at the end of which his own room was situated. Yes, there was something curled up asleep on a mat outside one of the bedroom doors. It

was the sandy cat. Something also prompted him to try the door. It was fast, and the sandy cat awakening snarled at him viciously.

One day the weather, which had been unusually fine and sunny, took a turn for the worse. A cold, fine drizzle setting in about dusk drove Waring back to the hotel earlier than usual. Crossing the hall and making for the staircase with the prudent intention of changing his coat, he almost fell over the nervous waiter, who, with his body bent nearly double, was engaged in apparent close examination of the bottom step.

"Lost anything, Joseph?" he enquired carelessly.

The man raised a white, damp-looking face, shook his head dumbly, and moved away.

"Queer chap," thought Waring again, "uncommonly queer chap. Should think he must have a screw loose somewhere. What on earth was he examining so closely? Oh, I see, some one else has been caught in the rain besides myself."

On the shining light linen covering that economised the wear and tear of the stair carpet was a wet footprint.

After this, Waring was rather surprised to find himself still the only occupant of the coffee-room. For the first time the apartment struck him as somewhat cold and cheerless as he took his solitary dinner at his usual table. Certainly, Joseph did his best to enliven the proceedings by dropping almost everything he took in hand; while he frequently wiped his forehead with whatever came most convenient in a way that rather disturbed the diner's fastidiousness.

"Got any one else stopping in the house?" he enquired casually. Then: "Hang it all, man, mind what you're about! You've dropped some mashed potato down my neck."

The man gasped an apology, and Waring repeated his question.

This time the waiter answered it by putting another.

"You—you haven't happened to see anybody, have you, sir?"

"No; but I thought, perhaps, you might have had some one down by the afternoon train."

"Oh, no, sir; not at all, sir. We have had no one by the afternoon train, I assure you, sir."

He seemed, if anything, unnecessarily voluble in his assertion of this trifling fact.

"Oh, it's of no consequence," said Waring, "only I had a sort of impression——" Perhaps it would have been more correct to have said he had seen an impression. "Eh? Did you speak?"

No, he had not spoken, only started and upset the mustard.

In addition to the unaccountable conduct of the nervous waiter, was the equally unaccountable conduct of the sandy cat.

Ascending the stairs leading to his room, Waring's ear was attracted by a strange, low, grinding sound, which, on being traced to its source, proved to be nothing more than the purring of this singular animal. Having taken up its favourite position on the mat outside that particular door, it was exhibiting symptoms of the most amazing feline satisfaction—the purring noise being mingled with occasional short, harsh, caterwauling cries, as though it were appealing to some one for admission.

Waring had reason to believe that the door was locked and the room unoccupied, and yet he could have sworn that he heard a voice—a man's voice, low, and muffled—from within call "Tim! Tim!" in answer to the appeal. And it would seem that the cat heard it too, for, rolling over and over, it appeared to wallow and contort itself with delight; while the purring sound it kept up might have been produced by half-a-dozen cats rather than one.

"Uncanny sort of animal," thought Waring as he turned away. "I wonder whether there really is any one in that room?"

On reaching his own door, he looked back again along the passage, but there was no sign of the cat.

Next morning, standing at the side door of the hotel, he saw the beast slinking across the stable-yard. Something prompted him to try the effect of the name he fancied he had heard it called by.

"Tim! Tim!" he cried.

The cat pricked up its ears, bounded some distance towards him, came to a sudden halt, glowered at him for a moment with its sinister yellow eyes, then, as much as to say, "You are not the person I took you to be," turned and walked away in another direction.

"I should like to tie a brick round your ugly neck and throw you into the sea," was Waring's comment.

As on the previous day, the weather changed for the worse towards evening.

Running lightly upstairs on his return to the hotel, Waring's eye was again attracted by a wet footmark on the step before him—then another and another. He tracked them to the top of the stairs, where, turning sharply off to the right, they were continued along the passage to a certain point. And yet, according to Joseph, he was the only visitor stopping in the house! At intervals, too, during dinner, particularly when the door was opened, he was aware of certain strange, discordant sounds issuing from the back regions. Somebody seemed to be indulging in a violent and protracted fit of laughter. But was it laughter? Just then the sound struck him as being more nearly allied to grief than mirth. The waiter, noting his attentive attitude, intervened at this point.

"Beg pardon, sir, it's the chambermaid. She's had a bit of a fright, and has been in hysterics, off and on, ever since."

"So that's it, is it? A fright, you say? How came that about?"

The man, who was apparently concentrating his whole attention upon a glass he was laboriously polishing, affected not to have heard this last question.

Waring repeated it in another form.

"What frightened her?"

"It was—at least—that is—it was the cat, sir."

Here the glass, upon which so much pains had been expended that it might attain the highest degree of crystalline perfection, had a hairbreadth escape.

"Well," was Waring's mental remark, "of course it doesn't matter a brass farthing to me what was the actual origin of the hysterics, but I wouldn't mind betting that, in spite of my own adverse opinion of the same quadruped, in this instance the cat has been libelled."

Somehow he could not sleep that night. It was in vain that he arose and punched his pillows and made hay of the bed-clothes; Morpheus was not to be entreated. What was most annoying, too, he had forgotten to wind up his watch, and so had no means of judging the time. Then he remembered that there was a clock below.

It was now daylight. If he crept to the top of the staircase he could look over and get a glimpse of its face. He rose accordingly, and opened his door very softly—not that he was afraid of disturbing any one, for he had every reason to suppose that there was no one else sleeping near him. By Jove, though, he was wrong! Surely that was the sound of another door

opening further down the passage? He hesitated for a moment; then cautiously widening the aperture of his own, he was just in time to see some one descending the staircase.

It was a man, judging by the figure—the face being turned away—a young man. He was dressed in dark clothes and wore some sort of a cap on his head, and as he slowly and silently pursued his way, Waring perceived that he was followed step by step by the sandy cat.

Somehow this quite put the idea of consulting the clock out of his head, instead of which he returned to bed rather perplexed and almost immediately fell asleep.

At breakfast he attacked Joseph on the subject.

"I thought you told me that you had no one else stopping in the house besides myself?"

The man stared at him for a moment open-mouthed.

"Did I—did I say so, sir?" he stammered.

"To be sure you did. And now I find there is some one occupying a room in the same passage—some one who is a very early riser. I saw him myself this morning going downstairs when it was hardly light."

The man had turned away and was busying himself at a side table; Waring could hear the clatter of knives and forks.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, without turning round, "but I think I know what you are referring to. I remember you did ask me the other day whether any one had come in by the afternoon train, and I said 'no, sir.'"

"Well?"

"It was quite true, sir. The—the party you refer to did not come by the afternoon train, sir."

This sounded plausible; only why this prevarication in the first place?

"Who is he?" he asked abruptly.

Still the man kept his face turned away, and his voice seemed difficult to manage as he answered that it was a naval gentleman, of the name of Manvers—Lieutenant Manvers, to be correct—who generally came to them about the last week in October. He also contributed the information that it was not likely that Waring would see much of him, as he kept himself almost entirely to his own room, and gave very little trouble.

"I suppose, then, he was going for an

early swim when I caught sight of him this morning!"

No answer; only a slightly increased clatter among the knives and forks.

"The cat appears fond of him," he went on half to himself.

There was a smothered exclamation from the direction of the side table, whereby that particular animal was seemingly dedicated to some violent end.

Waring was beginning to feel that he had pretty well exhausted Shellbeach, and that he should not care to remain over the end of the week. It was on Wednesday that the weather, which had been gradually going from bad to worse, culminated in a violent storm. Late in the evening the rain abated somewhat, but the wind remained as high as ever. There was to be a high tide at ten o'clock, and, in spite of meteorological drawbacks, Waring determined to sally forth and view the scene.

Having equipped himself, therefore, in the manner most calculated to defy the elements, he left his room and was already descending the stairs when he perceived that some one—in whom he recognised the same individual he had seen once before in the early morning—had the start of him. Joseph, too, chanced to be coming out of the coffee-room as they passed through the hall, one behind the other. Waring's attention was attracted towards him by the sound of breaking glass.

"If the fellow has to pay for all he smashes it must take a pretty good slice out of his wages," he thought.

"Joseph," addressing the waiter, "I am going down to the shore and shall——"

Glancing at the man's face he was struck by the look upon it, as, totally disregarding of himself or of the damage just committed, his eyes were fixed in a strange, wild stare upon the other receding figure.

"Does he drink, or what?" was Waring's thought as he followed.

No sooner did he set foot outside than the wind, which had been lying in wait, swooped down upon him in fury and dared him to come on. At the same time he gave a slight stumble as something—it might have been a dog or a cat—brushed hastily by him.

The "Ship" was not more than a hundred yards from the pier. After a successful wrestle with the adversary he set his face that way, baffled Boreas hooting after him in rage and derision. A dark

figure, now some way on ahead, showed his fellow-lodger to be making in the same direction.

The man at the turnstile, as he tendered his admission, remarked that it was a rough night, and he, for his part, wasn't sorry that it wanted only a quarter of an hour to closing time.

As Waring stepped upon the slippery planks a blinding cloud of spray, and a fierce gust of wind that made him stagger, gave additional weight to the man's words.

"Confound it all!" he muttered, as he regained equilibrium and eyesight, "the fellow on in front forges ahead, and makes no more of it than if it were the mildest zephyr."

Taking advantage of a lull he quickened his steps until he had lessened the distance between them by more than half. The wind, acting as a besom, swept the face of the moon clear from obscuring clouds, and Waring caught the gleam of a gold band encircling the man's cap. He also noticed, with a sort of shock, that though the rain had now ceased, moisture was dripping from the other at every point.

"I must see his face," he resolved.

Scarcely was the determination formed than it was fulfilled. For suddenly, as they were both within a few strides of the pier-head, the one who was in advance halted and wheeled round.

Never as long as he lives will Waring forget that wild, pallid countenance with its look of doom, or those eyes that, meeting his own, burned themselves into his memory. Then a great wave struck the pier, which seemed to rock beneath their feet, and a drenching cloud of salt spray enveloped both, hiding each from the other.

When Waring emerged, gasping and choking, he was alone.

Alone? But what was that half-drowned-looking object skulking there? Surely not a sandy cat! Cat, indeed! how came a cat there, of all living creatures? A sudden savage impulse took possession of him. He seized the animal as it made a futile effort to escape him, swung it backwards and forwards once or twice, and then flung it from him with all his force.

There was a wild yell, followed by a faint splash; then Waring, with this murder of the sandy cat upon his soul, turned and beat his way back in the teeth of the wind.

Arriving haggard and breathless at the turnstile, he made shift to gasp something to the effect that he feared some accident must have befallen the—the gentleman who had passed on to the pier just before him.

The man looked at him in surprise.

"You are mistaken, sir. No one but yourself has set foot upon the pier this night."

"Well, sir," this from the nervous waiter, "if you will insist on hearing all about it, and at such a time of night, too, all I know is that six years ago this very month he came and engaged a room here. He was a quiet sort of gent, but, all the same, he let out as he was expecting a letter—a very important letter. His first words in the morning would be: 'Joseph, any letter for me?' And his last words at night: 'Joseph, if any letter comes in the morning see that I have it at once.'"

"Well, one morning a letter does come. The address was in a lady's hand; I could swear to it. I took it up to him, and I seem to see the look on his face now. Being a trifle curious like, I waited about a bit outside his door. 'I hope it's good news,' I says to myself. Then I heard a sort of cry, and the words, 'False! false!' in a voice that made my blood run cold. I saw nothing more of him till night. Then he comes up to me, looking like the ghost of his own self. 'Joseph,' he says, 'I'm going out; you needn't sit up.'"

"I did sit up, but he never came back, not till he was carried in a cold, wet corpse."

"He was drowned, then?"

"Drowned off the pier-head. Death by misadventure they brought it in, but I knew better. And every year since then he comes back about the same time, and occupies his old room and scares most of us out of our wits."

"And the cat?" guiltily.

"Why, that cross-grained varmint took to him uncommon; followed him wherever he went, like a dog. What's more, it's never forgotten him, but watches and waits for him to come back—as you're a witness yourself, sir, as he does from time to time—which you'll excuse me, sir, but I'm all of a shake and a shiver."

At daybreak Waring woke with a strange feeling of oppression—a heavy weight upon his chest, so that he could scarcely breathe. As he opened his eyes a pair of malignant yellow orbs gazed straight into

them. Then, with a sound between a hiss and a snarl, something leaped from the bed.

He rose and searched the room, but found nothing. Door and window were both shut fast.

"I will not remain here another night," was the resolution he came to, "and if ever I come to Shellbeach again it shall not be in the dead season."

A few weeks later he read in the paper an account of the destruction of the "Ship" by fire.

The chief witness, a waiter, whose excessive nervousness under examination was particularly referred to, stated that he was carrying a lighted lamp when a cat, or something, ran right between his feet, upsetting him and causing the conflagration. He added that he believed the cat to be one that had mysteriously disappeared some time previously.

### HIS DANGEROUS FRIEND.

WHEN the chief takes a prolonged holiday it sometimes happens that his right-hand man gets none at all, or waits till the leaves in the woodland are sore and the rains of early winter have come. One of these prospects was before Hector Bayliss, and he felt as if he did not greatly care which. With strange ill-luck he had managed to quarrel with a pretty girl on the very morrow of winning her consent to be his wife. It was about another loiterer in the big, dull town.

"Everybody has forsaken London—everybody who is anybody. Yes, that's true," Morrison Schofield said. "But I'm not sure that I come into the class. And then I've been a persistent globe-trotter, and I've earned the right to do as I please, and not as other people do. I have a fancy now for poking about in the social desert. I feel as solitary sometimes as if I were at Tadmor in the wilderness."

"If I had your freedom and your money, old boy, I'd be off pretty sharp and find some change and some company."

Hector Bayliss was tying up a small bag of inferior gems, as he spoke, in his principal's private room. He was manager for Mr. Fischler, whose fame as a dealer in diamonds is in all great houses. The master's trust in Hector was as flawless as the finest stone he had ever sold.

The broadest of smiles overspread Morrison Schofield's handsome face. He

looked happily assured of his own comfort and content. His jollity rather grated on Hector. It emphasized the contrast in position. This old schoolfellow had come in for a fortune before he began the globe-trotting to which he had referred. He had not to screw, and scrape, and dance attendance on the whims of a selfish principal who absorbed all the good weather in his own vacation. Hector listened with a disagreeable sense for a second of being patronised.

"I have decided to stay and brighten you up, Bayliss. It is a shame that it should be all grind, grind with you. Fischler ought to know that all work and no play will blunt his best tool. As to company, I've got it here—first-class company. And didn't you hint something the other day about bright eyes that had bewitched you? You might take me along and introduce me as 'fidus Achates,' eh? Or am I too presumptuous, both in the thought and in the name?"

"Not a bit," Hector Bayliss answered. "You must meet Carrie Fuller. I was going to suggest it if you had not forestalled me."

He was ingenuous over his love-dream and engagement. There was positively a colour creeping into his cheeks. He did not notice the drop of Morrison Schofield's jaw and the quick line on his brow. These symptoms came and went in an instant.

"I shall be most happy."

The confident lover looked for no difficulty; but he encountered one. Though man might plan, it was for woman, in this case, to dispose.

Carrie Fuller turned a deaf ear to the proposition that she should receive and welcome her betrothed's oldest friend. Her mother came in when he had only gone so far as to find that there was an obstacle. The discussion dropped, to be taken up again at the next interview.

Between these two calls of Hector Bayliss at Lauriston Gardens a perilous situation had declared itself. On the second occasion he was perturbed and out of temper, and weary to boot. Indeed, long hours and the pressure of a continual anxiety had so worn him down that while waiting in the boudoir for Carrie's release from an appointment with a modiste, he dropped into an uneasy slumber. Carrie found him with closed eyes, talking wildly.

She was absolute in her refusal to see

Morrison Schofield. It vexed her lover, and an ominous gulf began to yawn.

"Tell me what grounds you have for disliking my friend, when, as I understand it, you have not even met him," Hector Bayliss demanded with rising anger.

"I cannot do that." The answer was very firm.

The young man took three or four agitated turns round the room. The happiness he had believed to be in his grasp seemed sliding from him. There was a masterful grain in his nature, and he could not bring himself to bow to prejudice. What could it be but prejudice?

"Then I am afraid I have made a mistake, Miss Fuller," he said bluntly at last. "You are hardly the girl I thought you. It is most unjust to poor old Schofield. As if I didn't know him through and through, and as if he wasn't a good fellow and the soul of honour! It is preposterous. I think I had better go."

She was very pale, and her heart ached. But she did not detain him, or attempt to furnish up a defence. It was her sister's secret, and she was not at liberty without Annie's leave to explain. Annie had confided in her on the promise that she would tell nobody. She could not break that bond even to retain her lover. She sadly wondered if Hector would ever come back, or if she had sacrificed her joy to sisterly fidelity.

But his friend was certainly not the paragon he had described. In Essex, in the spring, he had won shy maiden affection only to disappoint and disillusion his victim. Such perfidy was play to Morrison Schofield. Moreover, other matters came to light which seemed to show that he had a curious past, and had gained little from his travels but spendthrift habits and a knowledge of vice. There was no doubt of his identity. The name was not very common, and many features and episodes mentioned now by Hector Bayliss had previously been spoken of by Annie Fuller, or incorporated in the letters she wrote from under an uncle's roof. The man who had turned up in town was the same rolling stone, the same glib deceiver.

It was one of life's odd coincidences—which are countless—that the next day Carrie Fuller received a fresh and fortuitous illustration of Morrison Schofield's character. It was in a chemist's shop. She stood in the background while the attendant waited on an earlier customer. With a start she recognised him. Though it was

perfectly true that they had never met, he had once been pointed out to Carrie by her sister on the platform at Liverpool Street. She had a good memory for forms and faces, and there was reason to recall this man's outward presentment.

"Yes, I am a doctor," he said.

The words were so easy and so decided that they closed the door on suspicion. No further question was asked. The dispenser behind the counter busied himself amongst his drugs, and had soon wrapped up and sealed a phial. He gave it to the tall, well-dressed stranger and received the money. The girl in the shadow beyond knew that a deceit was practised, and it was a startling commentary on words that would not leave her mind.

She thought of Hector's trust in Schofield as the soul of honour, and, September though it was, she shivered. There were clouds on her sky before. They seemed to grow thick and mysterious. It was a ready falsehood in the chemist's shop. The speaker was no doctor; he had been trained for a civil engineer. A misstatement made with so much deliberate assurance had surely purpose behind it. Carrie Fuller was troubled about the risks that her angry lover might be running. Ought she to find means of warning him? But it was a problem how to do this and not seem to say "Come back." She would never ask him to return.

If she had guessed it, her mood of extreme solicitude was well matched at the gem dealer's establishment at the corner house of Stafford Court. There was increasing cause for worry.

"It means watching every day and every hour in the day as if for a man's life," the manager had remarked to Josiah Jaggars, the confidential clerk. "I shall be heartily sick of the vigilance I have to keep long before Mr. Fischler tires of the Alps and the Lakes."

That was at the beginning. The prophecy had become a fact. Not only was the ordinary load of care always heavy, but a special weight was added thereto. It appeared that the gem merchant's foes were within his own borders, and that Josiah Jaggars was a rogue. The clerk went according to Hector Bayliss's directions to Plymouth. His errand was to meet an agent with Cape diamonds, and while he was gone there fell a bolt from the blue. The evidence of his villainy lay in the manager's pocket. It was in the shape of a letter which an accomplice

seemed to have misdirected in a most unusual, but for Hector a fortunate, fit of forgetfulness. At first this precious epistle staggered the reader. It said:

"DEAR JAGGERS,—You can trust our little game to me. Everything is in first-rate trim for Thursday evening. The wheels are well oiled and I know where to place the swag. You will be on duty, for that's the night your muff Bayliss goes spooning, I believe. You watch for him. Good joke, isn't it? There will be only us to go shares, but you'll make them think it's a bit of work done by a gang. I promise to fix you up with a few bits of string so that you will never be suspected. Bayliss will not dream that you have a finger in the pie. Not even when you are pulling out the plums—or the stones. Bayliss is a conceited noodle; I know him. Mind you get his keys or copy them, no matter which. Yours, T."

Hector Bayliss could make nothing of the solitary initial that stood for signature. Nor had he the slightest clue to the handwriting. It was a bold boyish style. He turned helplessly to Morrison Schofield, who happened to be present when the letter was delivered by a messenger. Hector and he had been chatting over old times. Schofield saw the intellectual face whiten as his friend read on. He dexterously elicited the cause of this sudden panic.

"I don't recognise the writing," Hector Bayliss said.

"Of course you don't. It is hardly likely you would. If it is not wholly strange it is beyond a doubt disguised. But it's lucky you've got it instead of the man it was meant for. Fancy calling you a noodle inside, and then being so negligent as to write your name, or have it written, outside. There's retribution in that. And you can act upon your knowledge, don't you see?"

Hector Bayliss was looking straight across at the dun-coloured wall. The shock of the discovery had momentarily stunned him.

"It comes to this," he groaned: "that a man I could have backed against all the temptations of London has been tampered with. Fischler trusted him too—most thoroughly. He had earned complete trust. Why, Josiah Jaggars has been at Stafford Court twice as long as I have. When I came I was put over his head. It

wasn't the fairest thing. It was simply home influence that did it, and because I had a better education."

The other shrugged a pair of remarkably broad shoulders. A peculiar twinkle was in his eyes. It struck his friend that he regarded the whole affair in the light of a joke. That must be owing to the detachment that comes of the possession of wealth. He was to be envied.

"Perhaps Jaggars didn't exactly approve," he said. "He may have borne you a grudge in secret for it. Anyhow, mischief is meditated now. That is as clear as daylight."

"I am afraid it is. Yet I can hardly realise that Jaggars is in it. It gives the lie to all his past rectitude."

"Better say, perhaps, to his luck not to be found out. It is often like that in the world. The dark stain doesn't show for a while."

There was a sneer on the speaker's face. His cynical conviction of human wickedness made Hector Bayliss sigh. It was his only answer.

"A downright neat little plot I call it," Morrison Schofield went on. "Your clerk is to be attacked—by one marauder; he is to be robbed—by one; he is to be left bound as an injured and helpless servant of the establishment—by one. And it will be impossible to believe that there were not a band. That alone will be likely to divert suspicion from the proper quarter. Oh, yes, it is clever."

"They know that Mr. Fischler is absent, and of course Jaggars is on duty sometimes. I am not quite a prisoner all round the twenty-four hours. That would be unbearable."

"Quite so; and it fixes the time for this interesting game."

"Yes. They have taken the advantage."

"They clearly intended to do so. But it is all in the future, and the plan is wrecked. Why not take this person in his own snare?"

Schofield fingered the letter on the table.

"What do you mean?"

"It appears to me very practicable. You used to be Al at disguises when we were at Randell's together. I don't suppose you've lost your cunning in rather better than a dozen years. And you are pretty much the clerk's height, and size, and build. You don't dress as shabbily."

"How does that affect the writer of the letter?"

It was a feverish question.

"You are just a trifle dense, Bayliss, or is it the upset? I can see that we may not merely checkmate but capture him—you and I. If we stir on any other lines it is a dead certainty that these conspirators will get clear off. That fellow's scrawl won't carry you far. But if you can catch one of them 'flagrante delicto,' why, you will succeed in convicting both."

"How would you do it?"

"Easily. The writer has given himself away. Jaggars will be up shortly, and as you and not he got the message, he may be utterly in the dark about its contents."

"The scoundrel!"

"It's no use calling names. Better decide to make yourself up in rusty black, and with a blonde wig and a few whiskers pass in a poor light for Jaggars. The days are shortening; it will be dusk, and quite possible. You and I wait for our friend. I can slip out of sight when the bell gives tongue. The testing-screen at the back of your desk will answer capitally. Do you follow my scheme?"

"I think so."

"Mr. 'T.' duly arrives. You place the keys here upon the table, and point to one of the safes. Make it empty, if you choose, for the occasion. You have a row of them; it will be easy to arrange that."

Hector Bayliss nodded.

"That will do, then. Anyhow, you will keep the visitor in play while I creep out at the side of the screen and fix up the door; after that, he is at our mercy."

"The chances are that he will be armed."

"Possibly. But we need not grant him odds in that particular. We are both athletic men, equal, I believe, to the bit of work I am sketching. Does my proposition commend itself to you?"

The manager was buried in thought. There was audacity in the plan, but it had points which caused him to debate its wisdom. He had especially recoiled from the suggestion that he should further lure on the thief by bringing out his keys. Morrison Schofield, watching him narrowly, had seen his eyes grow hard and dark there. He sought to modify an unpalatable idea by the hint that the real hiding-place of Mr. Fischler's stock-in-trade might remain unknown and obscure.

There was much to be said for such a dramatic turning of the tables as was suggested. The pair of rogues richly deserved their intended discomfiture. It



looked fairly sound and feasible. Morrison Schofield was a man of the world, and smart to his finger-tips. He would make triumph almost a mathematical certainty.

But it was the tone of contempt in the letter that finally tilted the balance in favour of the venture. The writer had shown outrageous effrontery. "Noodle," indeed! If the miscreant came into the hands of justice he would no doubt sing to a very different tune.

"Yes, I like the notion, on the whole. We will put it to the test," Hector Bayliass said.

He resolved to say nothing on the subject to Carrie Fuller. For one thing it was not a woman's business, and it would inevitably frighten her. For another, her treatment of Morrison Schofield remained in suspense. But when he was next at Lauriston Gardens he was quite determined to bring Carrie to his own point of view. The result was total failure and a very deep chagrin. He was enthusiastic about the marvellous gifts and graces of his friend. He found an obstinate little sceptic, and he flung away in a passion.

The dénouement of plot and counter-plot promised to put a new and overpowering argument at his disposal. He would have it in his power to vaunt his own perspicacity. When the perilous episode was over, and the attack on the treasures in his charge was foiled, the time would have come to convince Carrie. She could then hold out no longer. Whatever the secret of her absurd prejudice, it must infallibly be broken down. He would explain and enlarge upon his debt to Schofield until her ears tingled. Then she would stop him in her eagerness to make amends. She would beg his pardon, and his friend's pardon, and he would forgive her. He saw it all—as Eastern travellers see a mirage.

There was a day and a half to waste in worrying. Never in his recollection had hours seemed to drag so unconscionably. He could concentrate his attention on nothing. People thought him "distract," and he feared, not without reason, that he made bad bargains. Even his penmanship had a curious waver very unlike his usual clerical hand. He felt that in a few days of this stress and strain he must go mad.

It was not so with the guilty Jaggars. He exhibited no sign of self-consciousness. He was stolid and deferentially dull. It tried the manager's patience not to break out in fierce and fatal charges. He longed

to accuse the clerk of double-dealing. But he schooled himself to wait, and instead of that he sent him away on the Thursday evening to fulfil a commission at West Kensington. Next he proceeded to assume outwardly the absent man's identity. He did not manage badly, and Morrison Schofield was early on the scene to give aid and advice.

The two men sat talking in low tones behind the barred windows of the principal's room as the shades increased. They were both excited. Suddenly the electric bell sounded the signal of approaching danger. Hector Bayliass answered the summons in person.

"Is all serene, Jaggars?"

A short, thick-set fellow put the question in a whisper.

"Yes, all's right."

It was an indifferent attempt to copy the clerk's peculiar quaver, and the manager was conscious of it and dreaded instant detection. But no suspicion seemed to be aroused. The visitor followed at his heels.

"Ah! The keys are here. That is good—very good. Now for a short cut to fortune. Which of these iron doors am I to try?"

Hector Bayliass still followed the programme. He threw out his hand and indicated the safe at the left of the testing-screen. The chamber there was empty, but there was a glass inset in the green balze, and at this instant a lamp in an opposite window made this a mirror. The manager caught a glimpse of what was passing in the rear. He saw a cruel, stealthy foe where he looked for a friend and an ally. There was no mistaking the dark gleam on the features; there was no misreading the traitor's action. The sight froze the blood in his veins. He was paralysed by horror as well as stupefied by the fumes rising into his nostrils as Morrison Schofield gripped him behind.

"Duped!" he gasped.

The word was in his own ears as an echo on a far off shore.

The big muffler steeped in the sense-destroying fluid was round his throat, he was dragged remorselessly back, and even the knowledge of a great imposition that implied his ruin faded into nothingness.

Morrison Schofield deftly removed the handkerchief and put it away at arm's length. He went over to join his confederate.

"Won't they stare when they find him?" he said, with a heartless chuckle. "'Pon my word I'd like to see it. We'll leave the place open, then a constable will be sure to enter sooner or later. But they won't make much of him yet awhile. We shall have a good start, and I guarantee the smartest man at New Scotland Yard doesn't hit upon our route to Buenos Ayres. I haven't knocked up and down the world for nothing. No, I've squandered a fortune—to get it back this way! I say, Tom Finch, he'll have to apologise to Jaggars twice over; once for his make-up, and once for his suspicions."

"This is the wrong set of boxes—there's nothing in 'em."

"Better luck the other side. We've the keys of all handy. That is what I rigged up the 'plant' for. He almost twigg'd me once."

Neither caught the sound of cautious steps without.

But they heard a sharper noise and looked round. It was too late.

"Click! Click!" Dark figures filled the doorway, and each rogue was covered by a revolver. Tom Finch threw up his hands by the instinct of his tribe. The other was like a wolf at bay. He poured out a volley of oaths and curses. He would willingly have had a fight for escape if he had seen the smallest hope. Some one threw up a gas-jet, and the inspector in command read correctly the fury in Morrison Schofield's eyes.

"No, you don't! Stand back. You are a dead man if you move," he cried. "You are both prisoners."

It was Carrie Fuller who had thwarted the last reckless venture of a broken villain. Her lover had murmured puzzling words in his doze of exhaustion. He fancied he was discussing the plan of his false friend. Then came the incident at the drug stores. It supplied Carrie with a possible key to the riddle.

She went to the police with her knowledge and her fears of treachery. For once they acted in a timely and fortunate manner.

Morrison Schofield received a long term of imprisonment. It transpired at the trial that the whole device, including the decoy letter purposely sent to Hector Bayliss, was of his contriving. Tom Finch was a professional cracksmen. He helped to convict his employer, and was lightly sentenced.

The reward of a spirited girl was soon forthcoming.

"You are the true judge of character," said Hector Bayliss, in a new and genuine humility. "Can you forgive me, Carrie, for my abominable temper? I shall have learnt to rely on my wife's verdicts."

It was perhaps sufficiently daring under the circumstances to speak in that way, but Carrie's smile gave absolution.

## A NIGHT OF PERIL.

THE scene of the adventure I am about to relate is Bickleston-on-Sea, a watering-place bordering on the English Channel, situated on the eastern side of the beautiful bay of Fitworth; and, being surrounded by grand and picturesque scenery, was much frequented by artists, and those who loved the beauties of Nature in their sterner and more imposing aspect.

The day had been bright, and the evening was calm and still. A more beautiful or more peaceful picture than that which met the eye of Stanley Bolderson, as he and his friend, Jack Wilkinson, sat on the beach smoking their cigars, cannot be imagined.

The sea, like a lake of molten sapphire and beryl, lay hushed in as deep a calm as ever brooded over its transparent waters, stretching out to the offing, where some outward-bound ships, with their white sails hanging listlessly from their yards, seemed to be floating in the middle ether.

Above, the sky expanded into an arch of the purest blue, over which, as the sun sank lower and lower, a soft amethystine effulgence spread, like the glow on beauty's cheek; growing deeper and deeper, till, as the sun touched the horizon, the ruby intermingled, and carpeted the sea and dappled the sky with loveliness.

Then, as if to cradle the departing luminary, a soft white cloud rose up, and the sun, as though fascinated by the crimson glory which surrounded him, lingered for a while on the horizon, and then sank languidly into his silvery bed.

"I don't exactly know what to make of that Miss Elmore," said Wilkinson. "I hope, Stanley, you are not going to fall in love with her."

"And why not, pray?" asked Bolderson.

"Because she hasn't got a penny to bless herself with, and you are not much better off. Take my advice, old fellow; take the advice of a man older than yourself——"

"Rubbish! Matrimony in my case is out of the question," replied Stanley.

"Ah! it's all very well to say rubbish; but, depend on it you are in the greatest danger; and as a friend I think it my duty to warn you. Take my advice, old fellow, and let us pack up our tooth-brushes and get back to London as fast as we can."

"That's exceedingly rich," laughed Bolderson. "The boot is on the other foot, dear boy. It is you that are in danger, not I. It's Maud Howard's brown eyes that you are afraid of, not that I should fall in love with Fanny Elmore! I'm not afraid!"

"Afraid! No, I don't suppose you are. Only this I've got to say, she won't suit you, she's as proud as Lucifer, and as to loving, well, she will never love anything so well as her own pretty self," concluded Jack.

"You think so," replied Stanley. "Well, have your own way; but what about Maud, —do you think she will ever love any one better than herself?"

"She! My dear Stanley, she's got the softest little heart in the world!" Here he broke off, and jumped up and waved his hand. "By Jove!" he continued. "Look here, Stanley, that's a challenge for you! Don't you see there's Miss Elmore on the balcony, and she's waving her handkerchief to you?"

"I fancy the challenge is for you, my friend," said Stanley. "It's Maud, not Miss Elmore, that is waving her handkerchief!"

"Ah! so it is; well, never mind, come along!"

To his more intimate friends Stanley Bolderson was an enigma. The fellows at his club set him down as "a very hard nut," and averred that nobody had been able to "crack him." You could not put him down, it was impossible to talk him down, and it would not have been an easy matter to knock him down; so most persons decided that it was best to let him alone.

"You're a couple of lazy boys," exclaimed Mrs. Howard, when the two friends entered the drawing-room. "Here have we been for more than an hour burdened with a secret we were anxious to impart to you, and there you lay, smoking, smoking like two steam-engines, and never once turned your heads this way!"

"It's all Bolderson's fault," interrupted Wilkinson. "He will argue, and I can't make the least impression on him——"

"Never mind that," went on Mrs. Howard. "What I wanted to say was that George is going to take us for an excursion to Stoneness Point and the Mewstone Rocks. We are told that the latter are very interesting as a field of investigation by persons seized by the common object mania, of which our friend Miss Elmore is one—a shore-naturalist she calls herself——"

"Yes, my dear lady," said Bolderson, "and——"

"And the question is, will you gentlemen join us?" replied Mrs. Howard.

"I should think so, rather!" exclaimed Wilkinson.

"Certainly!" responded Bolderson. "It was very kind of Mr. Howard to think of us!"

"Well," said Mr. Howard, who at this moment came bustling into the room, "are we to have the pleasure of these gentlemen's company to-morrow?"

"Yes, dear, it's all right," answered his wife.

"Then remember, boys, twelve o'clock sharp!"

"May I ask, sir," questioned Wilkinson, in his most insinuating manner, "if there will be any grub on board? You see, the sea air from the Atlantic is largely charged with ozone, and its energising properties are such that it creates in me an immoderate appetite. In such a case, you see, a large supply of grub is not only conducive to happiness, but an absolute necessity of life."

"You are quite right, my dear friend," replied Mr. Howard, "but my wife is a splendid cateress, and you may be sure that our craft will be well victualled."

"Thank you, sir," returned Wilkinson meekly, "that is a great relief to my mind. And now may I be allowed to ask what is the object of the expedition?"

"To view the scenery, and to search the rock-pools for zoophytes, sea anemones, and marine algae," put in Fanny Elmore. "They say the scene in Stoneness Bay is wilder and more imposing than in any other part of the coast."

"Rocks and precipices, and that sort of thing, eh?" he asked.

"Yes, and if I am rightly informed, a great deal of that sort of thing!" replied Fanny.

"Ah! Rocks and precipices are all very well in pictures," replied Wilkinson, "but when I go out sailing I like to keep clear of the rocks!"

"Don't mind what he says, Miss Elmore," said Stanley Bolderson, "there's not a man in the three kingdoms who admires grand scenery more than he does; he only affects to be cynical."

"I don't like affectation of any kind," replied Miss Elmore shortly.

"Come, girls," interposed Mrs. Howard, "I think we have had enough discord, let us have some harmony."

Maud assented, went to the piano, and after a short prelude, commenced a beautiful English ballad, in a voice so exquisitely sweet, with a taste so accurate, and a feeling so deep, that it sounded to at least one enchanted listener like the music of the gods.

Her example was followed by Fanny Elmore, who, though not Maud's equal as a singer, was a thorough musician, and played one of Mozart's sonatas with such brilliancy, feeling, and taste, as astonished and delighted Stanley Bolderson, and drew unqualified praise from the host and hostess.

Thus in harmony and kindly sympathy the time passed, and it was close on midnight before they parted.

When they got outside the two men paused, and Wilkinson exclaimed: "What a scene! How lovely! Look at the sea, Stanley, and the moonlight! What delicious air!"

"I once knew a man who hated people who went into fits about scenery," remarked his friend.

"Quite right, old fellow, you had me there! But," he went on, "this hush of nature is so intense and profound, its effect is magical!"

It was indeed an almost perfect night. The moon, which was at its full, was sailing slowly across the blue empyrean, its refulgence being reflected in the calm, still water before them.

"Roll on, roll on, queen of the midnight hour,  
For ever beautiful!"

quoted Bolderson. And they turned and walked in silence towards their hotel.

Two bright eyes had been watching them, and continued to do so till they disappeared in the distance. They were those of Fanny Elmore. This was her first step on the devious path of love. In her childhood she had dreamt of it; in her youth she had read of it; but up to the present time, till the advent of Stanley Bolderson, she had no actual experience of it. He had enwrapped her in the influence, and filled her with the magnetism of his

own being. Her woman's weakness, the peculiar susceptibility, had never before been touched.

And Bolderson? He was interested and excited, for, apart from her extreme loveliness, there was a certain intellectual superiority and tenderness of sentiment, an exquisite tone of refinement in Fanny Elmore which raised her above the superficial and frivolous beauties with which he had hitherto been associated. Yes, he was charmed and interested, but he was not in love, or he thought so.

The following day, when Mr. Howard and his friends descended the beach to embark on their aquatic trip, the sky was bright without a cloud. The sun was shining with unwonted splendour, and the sea, with its dancing wavelets, was glittering in the sunlight. It was hot—marvellously hot, just one of those perspiring days which we occasionally have in September. Never did a more beautiful day dawn upon an English watering-place, and never did a party have a brighter prospect of an enjoyable excursion than did the little party who were now being rowed out to the lugger "Gazelle," which was lying with her fore-sheet to windward, in the beautiful bay of Fitworth.

There was a somewhat languid breeze from the southward which came in fitful gusts, and then died away almost into a calm.

Here and there a solitary gull sailed lazily on, gazing at his own shadow in the water; then suddenly bending down, dipped his wings in the sea, and then rising again, with a sharp, quick turn and a shrill scream flew off slowly into the distance.

"Phew!" exclaimed Mr. Wilkinson, as he wiped his brow with his handkerchief, "it's powerfully hot;" and then, turning to the skipper, said: "Now, Daniel, my friend, can't you give us a little more wind?"

"All right, sir, we shall have wind enough presently; the glass have gone down an inch since breakfast," was the skipper's reply.

"But you don't think we are going to have a storm, do you?" questioned Mrs. Howard.

"No, ma'am, not yet," replied Daniel, "but you see, when the glass do go down like that, it's bound to come sooner or later."

"Then hadn't we better turn back?" suggested Mrs. Howard.

"Naw, naw, lady, we'm all right," sniffed Daniel; "mebbe it 'ull not come till to-morrow."

"Long foretold, long last; short notice, soon past!" quoted Mr. Wilkinaon.

"In that case, according to Daniel's prognostics, we shall have a stinger," croaked Bolderson.

"Can't you find some other topic for discussion, my friends?" interposed Mr. Howard. "If you go on at this rate you will frighten the wife and the girls into fits. And," he went on, "look at the sky and the sea! Why, to talk about gales and storms is ridiculous!"

"Don't say that, dear Mr. Howard," exclaimed Fanny Elmore. "In the first place I am not likely to go into fits even if we were caught in a storm, and secondly, I'm, like our friend Daniel, a believer in the barometer; and further, at this time of year, when we are close upon the equinox, I think there is nothing more probable than that we should have a gale of wind."

"There's a nice Job's comforter for you!" exclaimed Mr. Howard.

"Yes, indeed," responded his wife; "and if you take my advice you'll turn back at once."

There was a chorus of "No" from the young people, and the skipper shook his head. "Time enough, lady, here's a breeze coming," and in another minute the lugger was dashing on towards her destination. This continued for about half an hour, and then it fell to a dead calm.

The sky was clear, there was not a cloud to be seen. The air was unusually rarefied; the ships in the offing and distant objects were seen with uncommon distinctness, and there was a hazy burr round the sun. But though these two latter phenomena were indications of meteorological disturbance of some kind, they were not sufficiently pronounced to indicate danger.

For another half-hour or more the lugger lay motionless, except as she rose and fell on the great ground swell, and then came a second alashing breeze which brought them to Stoneness Point, and in sight of the great Mewstone Rocks.

As they rounded the point a strange, wild scene broke upon their view, and Fanny uttered a cry of astonishment and delight.

"How grand! What desolation!" she exclaimed.

Yes, Stoneness Bay, with the Mewstone Rocks in the distance, was indeed a scene of desolation. A chaos of rock, broken

and riven as if by some mighty convulsion of nature, extended some two miles seaward. The bay was open to the south-west, and surrounded by high cliffs, towering up grim and dark, and on every ledge and ridge clustered myriads of sea-birds, auks, puffins, gulls, divers, and other aquatic birds, while a shattered promontory which extended far into the sea was literally whitened by them; in addition to which the countless multitude which filled the air mocked the eye with their rapid and ceaseless evolutions, their strange, plaintive cries forming a shrill treble to the monotonous bass of the ground swell as it fell with a majestic roar among the rocks.

"There," said the skipper, as he rounded up under the lee of the reef, "them's the Mewstone Rocks, and now if any of you ladies and gentlemen like to land, Jim 'ull put you ashore in the dingy!"

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Howard. "In the first place I should not like to risk my life in such a cockle-shell, and in the second, climbing rocks covered with slippery seaweed which explodes when you tread in it, is not in my line!"

Fanny and Maud did not hesitate, and of course Wilkinson and Bolderson were quite willing to escort their respective ladies.

"Two at a time; there's nothing like precaution," said Daniel. "There's a little place as Jim knows of, where the ladies can land bootiful."

"I hope," said Bolderson, as he and Fanny were being rowed ashore, "that none of these rocks will take it into their heads to poke their nose through the bottom of this boat! That would be a damper to your enthusiasm, I fancy, would it not?"

"It's very hot," she replied, "I don't think a bath would be unpleasant."

"That is provided you can swim."

"Just so, or that you had a companion who could."

"Well, how do we stand in this case? I can swim; can you?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"I can hardly tell; but something prompted me."

"You seem to anticipate danger. I can't see any."

"No, nor I; it wants two hours to low water, so that these rocks will be dry for four hours to come."

At this moment the boat grounded, and Jim unshipped his oars and leaped ashore, followed by Bolderson, and the two assisted Fanny to land.

While Jim was gone to fetch the other two, Bolderson and his companion climbed to the higher rocks and looked about them. Landward, there was a series of rugged rocks rising up in spires and crags of the most gigantic proportions, growing less rugged as they extended seaward. In a few minutes they were joined by Mr. Wilkinson and Maud, and the search for those marine curiosities for which the Mewstone Reef was famous was commenced. With this search we have nothing to do except that it was brought to a premature close by a loud clap of thunder, which reverberated from rock to rock and from cliff to cliff in an abrupt and startling manner.

The sea presented a strange and anomalous appearance. To windward it was black and ominous, while masses of low flying scud dashed forward in divided portions and with irregular motion, not borne by the wind, but driven before it, while to leeward the sky was clear and blue and the sun shone brilliantly.

They all stood for some minutes gazing at this strange phenomenon, when they were again startled by a vivid flash of lightning and a crashing peal of thunder, which broke over their heads like the crack of doom. Blank dismay rested on their faces as they turned hastily and attempted to retrace their steps. They had not proceeded far when the gale burst upon them in all its grandeur and force. It blew almost a hurricane, and the rain descended in torrents.

Spite of the wind and rain they still pushed on, but their progress was very slow. Poor Maud was ready to sink with terror; but Fanny, who was naturally courageous, never flinched or hesitated, and did all she could to encourage her companion.

At last, exhausted and drenched, they were obliged to halt and seek for shelter under a piece of overhanging rock. They stood there in silence, for when they had attempted to speak, the roaring and howling of the wind and the rattling of the thunder rendered their voices inaudible.

A wilder scene or a more appalling situation for two young girls cannot be conceived. The darkness was intense, while every minute blue gleaming flashes of lightning burst from the canopy of black clouds overhead, and the roll of the thunder was almost incessant, the wild shrieking of the sea-birds adding another item to the hoarse chorus of the storm.

They sat there for more than an hour

gazing into each other's faces in blank dismay; and then the storm, that had burst so suddenly upon them, as suddenly ceased. The wind sank almost to a calm, the sky overhead was cloudless; but in the distance there hung a huge bank of black clouds, out of which flashes of the most beautiful lightning played continuously. When the rain ceased and the air cleared they looked for the lugger, but she was nowhere to be seen. They scanned the sea in all directions, but there was not a sail to be seen, not a speck on the broad ocean.

"This is a pretty state of things, old man," whispered Wilkinson. "What's to be done now?"

"That's more than I can tell," replied Bolderson, in the same low tone. "But we must do something. The tide is rising fast, and if we stop here we shall be drowned. In another hour these rocks will be under water."

"Then we must not stop here," replied Wilkinson. "Those rocks inshore are higher than these. We must work our way along and see if we can reach them."

"Yes," broke in Fanny Elmore, whose quick ear had taken in most of the conversation, "and the sooner we set about it the better. Come along!" And she started up and shook herself.

Meantime, what had become of the "Gazelle"? The last that was seen of her was that, under a reefed mizen and a storm-jib, she was flying up Channel like a lapwing, leaving Fanny and Maud and their two lovers to their fate. What happened to her during the remainder of the storm has yet to be told.

The task which Wilkinson had suggested was by no means an easy one. The reef was covered with seaweed of the bladder-wrack species, very slimy and slippery, which makes rock-walking exceedingly dangerous. There was also another danger, for the masses of fuci were so heavy and thick that they veiled many a deep hollow, and only slightly covered sharp-pointed rocks. In the former a limb may be easily broken, and by the latter a serious wound inflicted. This sort of travelling requires good nerves and a steady foot, and these were two characteristics which Maud Howard did not possess, and a couple of serious falls on her part, after a time, brought the party to a standstill.

Proverbially, time and tide wait for no man, or woman either, and both were now

acting in accordance with their proverbial character, bringing slowly but very surely death in their train—a death the more terrible from its slow but relentless advance. Higher and higher rose the tide, and nearer came the hungry waves, which were now almost awash with the reef, and which seemed eager to engulf them.

Never had a more beautiful evening shed its soft effulgence on a calmer or more beautiful sky; never did a more gorgeous sunset illuminate that far-off western horizon.

The sun sank, the daylight faded; they had scanned the sea and the horizon for succour, but it came not, and still the implacable waters continued their steady but insidious advance.

The sight of the pale, horror-stricken faces of the two beautiful girls, faces which only a few hours since were full of joy, but which now were pale and haggard, would have moved the heart of a stone.

Fanny Elmore was no coward, but to face such a death as stared that group of four in the face required more than ordinary fortitude; moreover, they were all consumed with a burning thirst, and as they had eaten nothing since their breakfast, the pangs of hunger were added to their other miseries. She sat there gazing up into Stanley Bolderson's face with a despairing look, as if she were saying, "Must we die, then?" when suddenly they were startled by a distant but very distinct sound.

"Ahoy! Reef ahoy!" came floating over the water.

They all responded simultaneously with a cry of joy. Springing up, they gazed in the direction from whence the sound came, and saw a green light twinkling in the distance, then a white light came in sight and was followed by the appearance of a red one, and Bolderson was sailor enough to know that the vessel was bearing down towards them.

"See! see!" he exclaimed; "it is the 'Gazelle'—the lugger! We are saved; she is close upon us!"

Yes, it was indeed the "Gazelle," and she was not more than half a mile distant, and was bearing down upon them with a press of canvas.

What these two poor girls did in the exuberance of their joy, they hardly knew, but if the truth must be told, they embraced each other with the wildest transports, and shed tears of joy, and Jack and Stanley came in for a satisfactory share of their ardour.

In less than a quarter of an hour they were all safely on board the lugger, and she, with a fair wind, was speeding back to Bickleston-on-Sea.

"You poor dears, how hungry you must be!" exclaimed Mrs. Howard, when they were fairly on their homeward voyage. "Now, Fanny, what shall it be?" she asked.

"A glass of water, if you please," she answered.

"Water! Well, there now! I never thought of water! There's pale ale, and soda, and brandy."

"We never go to sea without water, ma'am," put in the skipper. "Here, Jim, bring the young lady a glass of water."

"A glass!" exclaimed Mr. Wilkinson. "Bring a bucket; we are all consumedly thirsty, and there's nothing like water in that case!"

My story is done, the danger is over, and Daniel, having landed his passengers, who were met by a concourse of both residents and visitors, and received quite an ovation as they passed up the beach, is now quietly smoking his pipe, with a crowd of eager listeners around him.

"Well, you see, this is how it was," he was saying. "When the gale struck us, it was no use trying to face it. So I up helm and ran before it. Poor Mrs. Howard, she did get into a taking about them poor dears on the reef. We was cowards, and all sort of things, but I knowed better; you see 'discretion's the better part of wallour,' and I knowed the gale wouldn't last, neither did it. The worst of it was that when we was able to turn back, we had a strong westerly tide against us, and it was nigh upon twelve o'clock before we hove in sight o' the reef. As it gradually came in sight, and I saw that the most of it was under water, I can't tell exactly how I felt. At last we got within hail, and I shouted 'Ahoy! Reef ahoy!' You should have seen Mrs. Howard's face when a great shout came back."

"I told you how it would be, Stanley," said Jack Wilkinson as they strolled back to their hotel. "I knew you'd be booked. I saw you kiss her on the reef."

"Well, what if you did?" answered Stanley. "We are engaged!"

"All right, so are we!" replied Wilkinson. About the same time Maud and Fanny were exchanging confidences, and Fanny averred that she would not mind going through another such a "Night of Peril," if it brought with it such a blissful ending.

## THE MISER'S BARN.

## CHAPTER I.

THIS is the story, as Giles Mildmay told it to me. It may have, and probably has, a perfectly natural explanation. The doctor gave it a scientific solution. Men's brains and senses, when overworked and overstrained, play them strange tricks of fancy and feeling. And Giles Mildmay had undoubtedly been burning the candle at both ends for many a long day, and brain and nerves were beginning to revolt against the burden laid on them.

Giles Mildmay never attempted to give any explanation at all. Neither do I.

The mystery, gruesome as it was, brought in its train a blessing unspeakable for him. For he has the sweetest and truest hearted wife in the world, and as he says, but for that terrible and mysterious tragedy, their lives, after crossing each other in that Jersey hotel, would probably have drifted wide apart, never to come within sight or speech again.

It was a wet day.

Giles Mildmay, as he tramped through the Jersey lanes, trying to find his way back to St. Heller's, came to the conclusion that he had never experienced till this particular autumn afternoon a really wet day before.

The water seemed to fall in a steady sheet from the leaden sky overhead, and bubble up in springs at his feet, and rush in tumultuous miniature torrents down the ditches on either side of the lane. It was one of the last days of autumn. The golden reds and russet tints had almost faded from the land.

The tourist had departed. Giles Mildmay, who had only landed on the island that morning, or rather that afternoon—for the crossing had been stormy, and the boat late—had scarcely met a single creature since he had left St. Heller's.

To make matters worse, he had disregarded the warning of his guide-book, and had tried a short cut back to St. Heller's, only to prove the truth of the Jersey lanes being a forcible example of the proverb about the shortest ways and longest roads.

He wished devoutly that he had not come to Jersey at all. He should have followed the doctor's advice, and made for Italy or Spain.

As he tramped on the rain began to fall less heavily. By-and-by it ceased,

though at first, in the misty air and sense of general dampness, he hardly noticed the fact.

A sudden lightening of the gloom about him roused him to the cheering possibility that he might after all reach St. Heller's before nightfall. The short afternoon had been rapidly drawing in; but now, in the west, a sudden gleam of stormy orange light pierced the leaden bank of rain clouds.

This wave of lurid radiance, breaking upon the gloomy rain-swept world about him, had a strange effect.

Mildmay stopped for a moment to look west. He stood where two lanes crossed each other. Close by him, in a tall, neglected-looking hedge, he saw a gate. It was old and broken, swinging on one hinge, and creaking mournfully as the fitful gusts of wind caught it.

He went up to the gate, and found that it led into a small field. In it, a little way back from the gate, stood a half brick, half wooden building. The building was deserted and empty. Its rotting timber, its broken roof and general air of decay, showed that it must have been many years since it had been used as a human habitation. The grass of the field, coarse and untrodden, grew up to its walls, obliterating any path which might once have led from the gate to the doorway.

The deserted building, with its dreariness of tangled briar and rank, unmown grass, stood out clearly defined against the unearthly splendour of the western sky.

Here and there, sharp and distinct, rose out of the hedgerow behind the house a pollarded tree, whose maimed branches suggested contorted limbs, bringing an ugly recollection to Mildmay of the lepers he had seen in the East. They seemed to give the last touch of weird desolation to the scene.

But as the young man looked, the spell of silence and loneliness was broken. The building was not entirely deserted; some human being was still left in it.

Sharp, distinct, in a lull of the blustering wind, he heard the sound of footsteps coming from the building, as some one ran down a wooden staircase inside. The steps fell quickly and clearly on the wooden stairs, one foot striking the step more heavily than the other, as if the person descending were slightly lame. It was a peculiar footstep, and Mildmay found himself speculating as to what manner of individual was coming tumbling down the



staircase at so reckless a pace, and what any one would be doing there at all. They ceased suddenly, as suddenly as they had begun, stopping apparently close inside the door which stood ajar.

"Hullo there!" Mildmay called from the gate, pushing it open and stepping inside the field. "Can you tell me the shortest cut back to St. Helier's?"

The door fell to with a slight bang as the wind, rising, struck it, and then swayed ajar again. The young man felt that there was some one peering at him through the chink. But there was no reply to his call.

He repeated his question a little impatiently. But still the person inside the old building kept silence.

Muttering an unorthodox exclamation on his stupidity or rudeness, Mildmay stalked through the wet grass up to the house, and repeating his question, this time in French, he pushed at the door. For a second it did not yield. He imagined that the discourteous person inside was holding it, and he gave it an angry thrust. The old door, hanging on one rusty hinge, gave way before the force he used, and swung inwards, snapping its hinge, and then fell with a heavy crash on to the floor, sending up a cloud of musty, decaying dust, and tainting the air with an indescribable odour of mildew and rottenness. He ran inside, looking about him for the unsociable inmate—alarmed at the idea that he might have been hurt by his own roughness. There was no one there. The building stood bare, from one end to the other, in the yellow evening light that fell through the doorway.

He stared about him, calling again. No one answered nor stirred. As the suffocating dust cleared he saw that the plank flooring was rotten, great gaps here and there leaving bare the earth beneath, from which came up that damp, mildewed odour. The building was but a shell; everything had gone but the floor, and walls, and roof, while through wide rents in the latter the rain had fallen on to the sodden planks below. Instinctively he looked round for the staircase down which he had heard the halting, hurrying footsteps run.

Against one of the walls, near the doorway, he saw some projecting pieces of wood with the remains of what might once have been a handrail. They had apparently formed a staircase leading up to a floor above. But this upper floor, save for a few rafters, had entirely disappeared. He crossed over to the remains of the stair-

case, to inspect it more closely. Here and there the stairs had vanished altogether, leaving wide gaps, while those that hung still to the fungus-stained wall were so rotten, that they would have given way under a touch. No human feet had passed up nor down for many a long day.

Yet what was the sound that he had heard? He called again though he knew that he would get no answer, and then suddenly the strangest, most unaccountable paroxysm of cowardice seized him, a dread unspeakable, as if the loneliness and decay, the mildewed air, and the rotting staircase of the deserted building were inexplicably mingled with the mystery of those hastening, halting footsteps, and he turned and fled from the place.

## CHAPTER II.

THERE were only one or two visitors beside himself staying at Brie's. With two of them he had travelled from London the previous day, and owing to a slight former acquaintance with the husband—whom, however, until he met him in the train from London the evening before, he had not seen for some years—they had fraternised after the fashion of sociable travellers. Taylor had recently married, and he introduced Mildmay to his wife. Taylor, who was a good many years older than she was, was plainly devoted to her, while she, in her turn, was charming in her manner to him. She looked about twenty-five, and at first sight seemed almost plain; at least, so it struck Mildmay when first introduced to her.

They had been married about a year, and had only just returned to England after a prolonged honeymoon in America. This was her first visit to Jersey, and from some remark she let slip, Mildmay fancied that she would rather have spent a month or two quietly near her own people after her long absence from England. Perhaps he would hardly have noticed the speech but for something that occurred afterwards.

He and the Taylors were standing on the deck watching the approach to Jersey. Taylor, who was one of the most entertaining of companions with an even remarkable individuality, was talking of the probable changes he would find in the island, which he had not visited for ten years, though he had once been a frequent visitor to it.

Mrs. Taylor became rather silent, and

by-and-by she moved a little apart from the two men, and stood looking across the stormy sea to where it broke in thundering roar of white foam against the rocks of the island.

Mildmay, turning to ask if she would go under shelter as the rain was beginning to fall heavily, surprised a strange expression of mingled fascination and dread on her face.

"I shall never forget my first impression of Jersey!" she said. "To the end of my days I shall be haunted by the memory of a rain-swept sea breaking in foam against those terrible rocks!"

"And after all, it is nothing better than a gigantic potato field!" said her husband prosaically, as he turned away to look after the luggage.

"You and my husband are old friends?" she asked with abrupt irrelevance.

Mildmay hesitated for an almost imperceptible instant. He could hardly say so much for their acquaintance. It certainly dated back for some years, but they had really seen very little of each other. Taylor was rarely in England; and, indeed, they had met first in the East. And now, at her question, it suddenly struck him that in spite of Taylor's good comradeship and his attractive personality, there had been always a certain want of sympathy between them.

As he paused she turned away. And Mildmay felt vexed, feeling vaguely conscious that his momentary hesitation had in some way offended or disappointed her.

They were going to the same hotel, and after landing and lunching together at Brie's, Mildmay started out for a walk. Mildmay met them again at dinner. He gave them an account of his wanderings in the Jersey lanes. But he did not mention his adventure, restrained by a queer feeling of reluctance of which his common sense was thoroughly ashamed. On his return, in a talk with the manager, he had heard the story that was connected with the old building by the cross lanes. But in spite of the arguments of reason, the recollection of it would return at moments to him, arousing an uncomfortable annoyance at his own folly, and at the inexplicable cowardice that had seized him.

"I hope you don't object to ghosts!" he said to Mrs. Taylor, prompted possibly by one of these recollections. "I believe when they were banished from England

that they took refuge here. There are dozens of lanes and houses round about St. Helier's quite respectably haunted by the ghosts of the departed victims of sensational tragedies. The country folk will not pass them after dark."

To his surprise, she suddenly went white to the lips, and cast a strange, terrified look at her husband. He did not notice it.

"They are a frightfully superstitious lot here," he said carelessly, as he rose from the table. "It is not raining now, and the stars are shining. Shall we go for a turn, Clemence?"

The queer look of terror in her eyes vanished, as if his prosaic tone and speech had reassured her.

They went upstairs for the necessary wraps. Mildmay was in the hall when they came down again. Mrs. Taylor appeared first, and she waited at the foot of the staircase for her husband. Mildmay joined her as she stood drawing on her gloves.

"I don't think you ought to go out," he said, thinking as he glanced at her face, which looked pale and tired, that her husband was selfishly inconsiderate of her. "It has begun to rain again."

"Oh! I don't mind it," she said, with a bright laugh. "And Harry is such a confirmed wanderer that he never seems happy inside anything in the shape of a dwelling. I believe we shall be like the Wandering Jew, and travel to the end of our days."

Was there a faint shadow of regretful longing for the shelter and rest of a home of her own in the grey eyes?—which, Mildmay had discovered by this, had a rare beauty of their own. Indeed, he wondered now, after the few hours he had spent in her society, how it was that he had first thought her plain. The mobile features, the wonderful changes of expression in her eyes, now sparkling with laughter, now dark with thought, the proud sweet mouth, gave her a charm beyond mere physical prettiness. And he was beginning to feel a little sorry that she was the wife of Taylor.

Then suddenly he forgot her.

The hall of the hotel, with its lamplight and every-day commonplace of surroundings, seemed to fade from about him, and once more he stood amid the decay and desolation of that old rotting building, set in its wilderness of grasses and brambles and overshadowed by that spell of nameless

terror. He stood staring up the staircase ; down them, clear, distinct, with their peculiar limping tread, came running those mysterious footsteps, the very echo of those which he had heard, a short while before, in the old building by the cross-lanes.

"Mr. Mildmay! What is it?" Then Mrs. Taylor, following his gaze, looked up too at her husband, who came hurrying down the staircase with the active lightness of a younger man. "Oh! Henry! Do be careful! You shouldn't run down the stairs like that. He has a weak ankle, and he strained it yesterday morning," turning again to Mildmay, but still looking a little puzzled at the alarming effect her husband's headlong run had apparently had on him. Mildmay passed his hand quickly across his eyes, the blood rushing warm through his veins as that uncanny and second inexplicable fit of cowardice left him again. For an instant he had felt genuinely afraid he was bewitched. Any man might limp as he ran downstairs—and his wife had explained it. Taylor had hurt his foot the previous day. It was an odd coincidence, certainly—

He found Taylor looking curiously at him, too.

"What the devil is the matter?" Taylor asked, with a sudden roughness of speech. "You look scared out of your wits."

"You are ill," exclaimed Mrs. Taylor, with womanly sympathy, divining a possible reason for his paleness, and perhaps wishing to soften her husband's discourtesy.

Mildmay was utterly ashamed of himself, and was equally unable to account for his folly.

"I had a most absurd adventure this afternoon, and Taylor's footsteps, as he ran down the staircase, recalled it to me. I was standing by an old tumbledown building near some cross-lanes, and I could have sworn I heard some one inside. But when I went to look to try and find some one to direct me back to St. Helier's, it was empty. The wind probably had a voice in the matter. But it was really a thrilling adventure!" with mock earnestness; "for when I got back here I heard that the place is called the Miser's Barn, and that it is supposed to be haunted by a girl who is always looking for something or somebody."

"What an exciting tale! You might make good copy out of it—but perhaps you believe in the ghosts of departed victims?"

Taylor, leaning against the staircase

wall a few steps above them, looked down at Mildmay from under his half-shut lids—a trick of his at times, and a trick that had always awakened a vague distrust in Mildmay. It gave a curious glittering look to the half-concealed eyes. But it was the sneer in his tone that irritated Mildmay now. He coloured angrily, but Mrs. Taylor, with the prettiest tact, broke in with a light speech and smoothed away the momentary friction between them. She and her husband moved away together. But half-way across the hall Taylor glanced back at Mildmay. Was it only fancy again? If so, Mildmay's imagination was beginning to play him fantastic and unpleasant tricks. His doctor's warnings had been true enough. But surely there had flashed across Taylor's face the most baleful look of hate and fury that Mildmay had ever seen yet on a human face.

Before going to bed that night he found out that Taylor had not left the hotel all the afternoon.

### CHAPTER III.

EXPLAIN it to himself as he would, that coincidence, or whatever he chose to call it, was curious; probably the gruesome nature of the story attached to the old building related to him on his return that afternoon gave the incident a deeper significance. At least, so he allowed to himself as he thought it over. But it was strange all the same, and that look in Taylor's eyes added to the disagreeable perplexity. Ten years ago the building had been inhabited by an elderly man and his orphan niece. The man led a strange, secluded life, and was of a morose disposition. He had come from abroad a few years previously and settled in the place. No one knew anything of his past; he had from an early age separated himself entirely from his family, who lived in Jersey, and was believed to have spent his life wandering from one country to another. When he came back to Jersey, his last remaining relation, a brother, had just died, leaving his daughter penniless. Leriche took her to live with him in the house he had built himself in the field near the cross-lanes. He was supposed to be very poor. He and the girl lived miserably, and she was very unhappy. She always declared that he was a miser. She was of a passionate, wilful disposition, and there were frequent and fierce quarrels between them. Then one morning, after an angrier

quarrel than usual, Pierre Leriche was found dead in his bed—poisoned. The girl, who was then about nineteen, was accused of his murder, and all the evidence tended to incriminate her. She was found guilty; her sentence of death was commuted to penal servitude for life. But a year later she died in prison, broken down in mind and body by her terrible fate.

She persisted in her innocence to the last, also in the statement she had made that she had heard some one on the night of the murder leave her uncle's room and run downstairs. She had thought it was her uncle, especially as the footfalls sounded slightly lame. He had been suffering from rheumatism and halted a little in his gait. She declared, too, again on her death-bed that her uncle was a miser, and had a large sum of money secreted in the house. The house, at the time of the trial, had been searched, but no money was found, and it was believed that she had only invented the tale to screen herself by casting the guilt of the murder on an imaginary thief.

But ugly doubts or morbid fancies fled when he rose next morning. The weather had changed, and the sun was shining. He met the Taylors at breakfast, and there was something so frank and genial in Taylor's manner and cheery spirits that he felt still more keenly the absurdity of the unpleasant suspicions that had troubled him.

Mrs. Taylor looked ill, and her husband, who was much disturbed by the fact, made her promise to take a quiet day.

Afterwards, when Mildmay met her in the hall for a few moments, she asked him what he was going to do with himself that day. He mentioned some expedition he intended making to the other side of the island, and a light flashed into her eyes as of intense relief. As the expedition would keep him away all day, it was hardly complimentary. But he scarcely thought of that in his pity at seeing her look so ill.

"I had a bad night," she said, in answer to his remark to that effect. "I wish we were out of Jersey!" with a sudden strange passion, of which the next instant she seemed ashamed, for she laughed nervously and moved away.

But he did not go to the other side of the island after all. Taylor met him a few moments later, and suggested that he should put it off till the morrow, when he and his wife would join him. She would be rested by that time.

Mildmay consented. Mrs. Taylor did not appear at luncheon. Her husband proposed that he and Mildmay should go for a walk afterwards. It was a fine afternoon, and they went some distance into the country, returning by the Miser's Barn. It was past four when they reached it. The daylight lingered in a flame of red in the west; but the chill October mists were rising from the land, shrouding the deserted house, giving it a touch of unreality, as if it were the ghost of a dead human habitation.

A sudden laugh, full of malignity, made Mildmay turn sharply to look at his companion.

The change in the man's face was as horrible as it was indescribable; his eyes were aflame with a wicked, triumphant cunning.

"Hush! do you hear the dead girl calling me!" he exclaimed. "I've had to come back here at last."

He thrust open the gate and went up to the house. In an instant the whole truth flashed on Mildmay. Taylor was the murderer, and he was mad. He ran after him. The scene that followed was over in a moment.

The doorway stood wide open, the door lying on the floor as it had fallen the day before.

Taylor had disappeared into the semi-obscurity of the building when Mildmay reached its threshold. As he reached it he found himself facing Taylor, who a few feet away stood awaiting him, a revolver in hand. In one instant's vivid consciousness Mildmay remembered that Taylor was a deadly shot, and that as he stood in the doorway, his own figure was distinctly outlined against the red evening light outside.

Then a woman's scream, a tongue of flame, and the ping of a bullet confused themselves in his brain with a sharp pang of pain, and he fell senseless to the ground.

It was many weeks before he heard the end of the story, and then it was Taylor's wife who told it to him. For he lay at the point of death. Taylor's bullet had only just missed its fatal aim by the intervention of his wife, who, driven by a presentiment of evil, had made her way to the old building. She had only arrived a few moments before the men came up. Taylor had not seen her on entering. Her sudden scream as he levelled the revolver disturbed its aim by a hair's breadth.

Her apparition so sudden and unexpected by his side, on the scene of his crime, was the last stroke that his remorse-tortured brain could bear. He thought it was the spirit of the dead girl, who had died for his crime, and with a scream of terror he had shot himself dead at her feet. Among his papers was found a full confession, written some years before, of his crime. He had known Pierre Leriche abroad during one period of his wandering life. By a strange adventure in which they had both been engaged Pierre Leriche had become the possessor of some almost priceless rubles. Taylor, justly or unjustly, had claimed a share of them, but Leriche would not part with any. Taylor, partly from greed, partly from a desire of revenge, had, when he discovered Leriche in Jersey, murdered him and stolen the rubles, the proceeds of which had given him a handsome fortune.

Mrs. Taylor, who, in spite of her own trouble, and it was dreadful enough, helped to nurse Mildmay back to life, told him how, soon after their marriage, she began to fear that all was not right with her husband. As time went on, she began to be almost convinced that he was mad. Some words, muttered at times in his sleep, suggested that remorse for some crime had helped to unhinge his brain. He had mentioned Jersey in these unguarded words, and she had been much disturbed when he insisted on going there on his return to England, though he had more than once expressed to her a dislike for the place. The night before his attempt on Mildmay's life he had been very restless; his sleep evidently haunted by ugly dreams, in which he was always being tracked down by an enemy whose name was Mildmay, and on whom he swore a deadly revenge, to be carried out in the old house of which Mildmay had spoken. She had roused him several times, but his manner had been so strange that it had terrified her. In the morning, however, he had seemed all right again, and had even laughed at her account of his dreams. But the dread suspicions that haunted her would not be entirely driven out, and on hearing that he and Mildmay had, after all, gone out together, she had, guided by that presentiment of evil, made her way to the Miser's Barn.

Attended by such a dear nurse, convalescence was a delight. But when Mildmay was able to leave his room, she came to him, looking sweetly in her widow's

weeds. "You want me no longer; I am going home."

"Dear Clemence," he whispered, "I want you for all my life."

And so, after her year of widowhood, they were married.

## AN ADVENTURE IN THE HIGHLANDS.

"DONALD, you'll have to go to Cancuspie yourself," said my father, looking at me over his gold-rimmed spectacles. The time, an afternoon in blustery autumn; the place, my father's office—Ernest Macfie, writer to the signet, if you please—in Auld Reekie. Analogy may perhaps suggest that in his son you have a budding Walter Scott. But no! I can draft an information for the Court of Session in different well, and have a fairish hand for a golf club, and what I see I can describe, but nothing beyond; and I can't even do the vernacular properly, whereas my father has got the "auld Scotch" at his fingertips.

I must say the auld man has a vicious habit of giving his son all the nasty disagreeable pieces of business that come into the office, and this affair of Cancuspie was just one of the nastiest, for it was to carry out a process of ejectment against some poor creatures from the home of their fathers. And naturally, I objected fiercely. It was not a business for me. Let some of the lads in the outer office see to it.

"Donald," said my father, taking a huge pinch of snuff from what he calls the "sneeshin" over the fireplace, "I'm full sorry for the poor things at Cancuspie, for they're of a good stock, and never had a thought to come to this. And that's why I say go yourself, for I should like to be sure that all was done with kindness and discretion."

"In fact, I'm to drive the hook into them tenderly, as Isaak Walton might say."

"Well, you'll have to go, anyhow," said my father in a tone that admitted of no dispute, "and go at once, for here's this mon," shaking some papers fiercely as if he held the "mon" himself in his grip, "is worrying me for being unco' slow."

And thus it was that at half-past five next morning, and such a morning!—blowing and snowing and raining all at once—I found myself a passenger, by a hair's

breadth, in the early train, and "for the Heelans boun." My hasty entrance into the carriage just as the train was moving off seemed to irritate a fellow-passenger, a red-haired, heavy-jowled person, with a cruel mouth like a spring-trap. But after eyeing me for a few moments as the ogre-eyed Jack, the springs of his mouth worked it into an upward curve—you could not say he smiled.

"Young Macfie, I think!"

Then also I recognised my mon. It was the very mon, indeed, whose animadversions had roused my father's ire—Mr. Spilster, the recent purchaser of Rossmore Castle and all its domains.

"About that Cancuspie business, eh?" pursued Mr. Spilster, with a scintillation of satisfaction in his eyes for which I longed to kick him; but I bore my father's adage in mind—"Always respect the dirty lucre."

"Mind!" continued Spilster; "no delay! After their impudent attempt to keep me out of my property they deserve no consideration."

I only grunted in reply, and lit a cigar as an excuse for keeping silence, but the mon went maundering on with an air of serene self-importance that was indeed irritating.

"I shall pull down the house," he said.

"I can see it from my drawing-room windows, and it annoys me; and the pasture-land and the arable I shall plant with larches and turn into the forest."

"You'll never do that," said I warmly.

"Why, there's many a man's bread in those fields."

"I can afford it!" he said loftily.

The rights about Cancuspie were these: I may as well make them plain as we are worrying along towards the Highlands. It belonged to the domain of Rossmore, that had been the seat of the MacEwens ever since the time of MacEwen Mohr, about whom my father has tales to tell that would make your hair stand on end; at least, it did mine when I was a boy. Well, all the cadets of the house were sent into the army, and one of the "Peninsular heroes" was Major Eric MacEwen, who came home to end his days among his kinsfolk, and to whom the reigning chief granted a lease of Cancuspie, renewable perpetually, at a low rent—at least, that was what the family said, but my father did not believe that there had ever been a lease at all; it was just held on the MacEwens' word—and a good enough title,

too, if the MacEwens had been able to hold on to Rossmore; but they came to utter ruin in the end, and Spilster bought them out. Now the Cancuspie line, founded by the Peninsular hero, had ended in a grand-daughter, who married a Captain Douglas Grant, who spent all her money, and would have sold Cancuspie, too; but when he tried to sell, behold, there were no title-deeds, and not a penny could he raise. His wife, poor thing, died of the trouble, and yet thankfully, too, so they say, that Cancuspie was saved for her child's sake that by this time would be a well-grown young woman.

And you must remember that Major Eric had built a handsome house on the land, and had spent much of his money in improving the farm, so that it seemed hard that his descendants should have to go; and to do Spilster justice, he had offered terms. But the Cancuspie people would not go, and fought the matter in the law courts, but lost at all ends, and it was with an order of ejectment from the Court of Session that I was now on my way northwards.

It was a wearisome journey with such a companion, you may guess, and when I landed at a little Highland station I was quite ready to take my ease at mine inn. But no inn was there. Out of the clatter of the Highland patois I elicited that there was no inn nearer than Cancuspie, and that was not an inn, but the leddies there let rooms to traveller folk in the season. But carriages whatever—yes, there were plenty of carriages, and presently a battered chaise with a rough sheltie and shock-headed driver was at my disposal.

And a dreary drive it was over the waste in the twilight, huge hills glowering upon one in the distance, and now and then a morass to cross, or a stream to ford, by way of variety. It was black night, and I would have been glad of shelter anywhere, when we saw the dim glow of lighted windows at Cancuspie. Would I meet a welcome there? Hardly, if I revealed my real errand. I should be rightly served if I were left to camp out on the cold hillside. And the rain, which had held up for awhile, began to drizzle again with steady persistency, and such a wind came howling down the straeth!

But I was a traveller and wanted a lodging, and there was no lie in saying so. As we drove up to the door, I thought the place looked too dignified and imposing for my purpose, but the Highland lad had

no scruples of the kind, and knocked and rang with saucy importunity. No white-headed butler came to the door, but a wild-looking lassie, who as soon as she saw us ran off screaming: "Mistress, mistress, here's a stranger gentlemans!" A middle-aged, pleasant-looking lady came forward, to whom I apologetically explained my needs. Perhaps I had made a mistake.

"Oh, there was no mistake," said the other calmly. They did take in people during the season, and though for certain reasons they had now shut up the rooms they usually let, yet as I had come so far I might stay. And the pony might be put in the stable, and the lad might sleep in the loft, and then in the morning I might go my way rejoicing.

I suppose that the Greeks, when they were being wheeled into Troy in the wooden horse, thought themselves very fine fellows, and enjoyed the joke amazingly. But for me, as I crept into the house of Caneaspie under false pretences, I felt very small indeed.

The rooms into which I was shown felt rather chill and cold, but a fire had been lighted in the hearth; everything was scrupulously neat and clean, and the old-fashioned furniture shone with reflected radiance on the scene.

"We will do what we can for you," said the lady who had first appeared, and who proved to be Miss MacEwen.

She introduced me to her niece, a plain but intelligent girl, who, while my rooms were being prepared, gave me an account of the places of interest in the neighbourhood, touched upon the sporting capacities of the neighbouring lands, and upon the change of dynasty at Rossmore, all with the laudable object of satisfying feminine curiosity as to who or what I was. If this was the heroine of the romance I had pieced together about the Caneaspie people, I was a little disappointed in her; and yet a little relieved in my mind, for here was evidently a young lady who was not without capacity for taking her own part in the struggle for existence.

But once within my own rooms I felt that I was cut off from further society. "You will ring, if you please, if you want anything," said Miss MacEwen, as she went out. If I wanted anything! I was starving, but too shy to suggest supper to such a dignified person and at this time of night. But I might come to terms with the shock-headed lassie, and persuade her to bring

me some bannocks and cheese. And rather timidly I rang the bell.

"What's your pleasure, sir?"

At the words I looked up, and felt hunger no more, nor any other sensation but wonder and delight. I had never seen such a beautiful girl in all my life. The lovely complexion, the eyes of a deep violet-blue, the rich tresses of dark gold modestly gathered under a snood, the charming figure in bodice and short skirt, the whole inventory of charms coming upon me at one coup-d'œil, fairly took away my breath. My pleasure, indeed! My pleasure would have been to feast my eyes upon her continually, but her eyes drooped under my gaze of honest, dazzled admiration.

"Was you wanting your supper, sir? It will soon be ready."

The voice, too, so sweet and tender!

"Please go on," I cried; "tell me something more about my supper."

The girl smiled and blushed; perhaps she sympathised in the confusion of faculties that had fallen upon me.

"Indeed, sir, I can tell you nothing more except that it will soon be ready."

And then a voice in the passage said: "Mary!" softly, as if in gentle reminder that the colloquy had lasted long enough, and Mary vanished with one quick glance at me from under her curved eyelashes that filled me with delight.

I had forgotten all about my wretched errand. But soon I was reminded of it, however. A carriage had stopped at the gate, and presently Mary appeared with a face rather pale and scared.

"If you please, a gentleman from the Castle wants to know if there is one Macfie staying here with process from the Court of Session."

"I don't know him," I replied, with hauteur.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Mary joyfully, and I heard her say indignantly to some one outside, "I was quite sure it was not he."

But ah, what would she say when she knew the truth on the morrow?

The rest of the evening was all taken up with thoughts of Mary. When she was in the room, all was bright and joyous; when she left it, darkness set in. And when she came for the last time, and asked:

"Is there anything more you might want the night?" it was felt to be a sorrowful parting.

"Mary," I said timidly, "you have many sweethearts, doubtless."

"No, indeed, not one," she replied indignantly.

"Then would you be mine?"

Her eyes laughed, but she held up a finger in admonition, and I heard the same voice as before say softly, "Mary!"

When I was shut in for the night I was not long in getting to bed, but not to sleep for some time. My thoughts rested first upon lovely Mary, and then upon the disagreeable wakening I should have in the morn, with the business upon me of turning these kind, estimable people out upon the cold hillside. And Mr. Spilster would doubtless take care that the local officers of the law should be in attendance in good time, and I saw no possible way of escape from the horrid business.

The rain had broken off a little, and now and then the moon shone out from behind a dark cloud with sudden brightness. There was less wind, too, though it still soughed among the trees outside, and whistled and howled along the passages. Feeling so restless, I got up and looked out of window. My rooms were in a wing to themselves, and looked out upon a pretty flower garden, with lawns and shrubs beyond, and beyond were pastures that enclosed a small loch, now dark as ink, and again catching a mournful light from the moon. The hillsides were open fields, and dark plantations crowned their summits. It was a pleasant oasis redeemed from the waste and gloom of the surrounding country. It had been the work of long years, and of successive generations whose children it had supported in comfort and plenty, and now it was all to be made desolate to gratify the pride of a Spilster.

I went to sleep after this, and woke feeling tranquillised and refreshed. It was still very early, half-past two by my watch, and I was going to try for another nap, when I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs come pounding along the road. Whoever it was rode at a great pace, and pulled up suddenly at Cancuspie. Then doors were opened, and voices spoke in agitated tones. "No, no, they are not here," in a feminine accent; and a rougher voice, "I will have them." And the voices sounded as if close at hand in the very next room, for there was a room beyond mine, perhaps more than one; anyhow, I had noticed a heavy door bolted and locked. The sounds continued, as if things were flung about in some mad search. Then there was a respite, and footsteps sounded on the stairs, and the noises began again overhead.

Somebody packing up, perhaps, I surmised. But next moment, either the door opened or a figure glided through it, but a figure there was, a woman's, wrapped in a loose dressing-gown, with hair in rich tresses hanging to her waist, and listening intently while she moved with quick, furtive footsteps across the room. She had something clutched to her bosom, which to me looked like a bundle of papers; and seeming to come to some sudden decision, she ran to the window, opened it, or seemed to open it, and passed out.

Then I jumped up, threw on an overcoat, and followed. The windows opened upon a flower garden, and at the bottom of the garden was a terrace wall, adorned at intervals with stone vases of a handsome classic pattern. An iron wicket was the only means of exit, and that was locked. For a moment I thought I saw a figure hovering over one of the vases—but there was no one there.

The freshness and coolness of the air acted like a charm in cooling my fevered nerves. I felt that I had been the subject of an hallucination, due, no doubt, to prosaic physical causes. The salmon steak of supper was responsible for the galloping horse, the collops represented the subsequent turmoil, while the cream cheese represented the charming but dishevelled young woman, and a certain resemblance to Mary which I had noted in the visionary form might be ascribed to the way in which my thoughts ran upon that young creature. And soothing myself with these reflections, I fell into a sound sleep.

To wake in the morning with the sun shining brightly, and the music of some Scotch ballad in my ears. I dressed hastily and went out by the window. The garden gate was open, and the singer was there; it was Mary herself, with her hands full of dewy flowers. But she was dressed in a very pretty morning costume, and greeted me with a quiet dignity that set me back into my proper insignificance.

"It is Cousin Elsie's turn to-day," she said, smiling, "and I doubt if you will be so well served. Yes, I am Mary Grant of Cancuspie; but for how long I don't know," and she sighed.

Yes, and at nine o'clock, with horse, foot, and artillery, I was to drive Mary out of the pleasant home of which she was the delightful mistress. I turned away with a responsive sigh, which resembled a groan, to meet with Miss



MacEwen, Mary's aunt, it seems, who greeted me civilly, but coldly.

"Have ye slept well, sir, and no been disturbed in the night?"

"Did you hear the horseman on the road?" I asked quickly.

"Indeed, no," cried Miss MacEwen, turning pale. "Step this way, sir, and let me ask you what you mean."

And I told her what I had seen and heard; for somehow, though in my full waking senses, I felt more and more impressed with a feeling that I had been privileged beyond the lot of ordinary mortals in the vision of things beyond human ken.

"And that is strange," said Miss MacEwen, trembling. "I'll tell you the story, now you've seen so much. It was twenty years ago, and Mary was a babe, and her mother but sadly, and Captain Grant was away at his races and gambling devices, when in the night he comes galloping up, having just lost five thousand pounds on some great race. Now, if he could get the title-deeds of Cancuspie, there was a man who would lend him the money on them, and his honour would be saved. Honour, forsooth, and he to leave his wife and bairn to go starving! But she denied him that she knew aught about the deeds, and he went ranting and raving all over the place, but he could not find them. They sent to me next day to say my poor cousin was dying, and I only reached her bedside to receive her last words. 'I have saved Cancuspie for my bairn,' she said, but she could say no more. And I have thought, how can she rest in her grave and know that she died for naught, and that Cancuspie is lost after all?"

"Come along," I cried, breathless with excitement. "She did not come to me for nothing. She came into the garden; she hid the parchments there; I saw her standing by one of those vases. Could she have put them there?"

"Man, they're solid," groaned out poor Miss MacEwen.

"But are they all solid? Let us try."

And I ran along the terrace, sounding the vases one by one. The last one sounded hollow. I jumped upon the wall and, with an effort, raised the lid of the vase fastened by the lichens and mosses of twenty years'

growth. Yes, there was the packet; I was sure of it. I read the endorsement, and could see old Rossmore's big seal; and then I leapt down and put the deeds into Mary's hands.

"Heaven bless you, my dear," I said. "You shall still be Mary Grant of Cancuspie."

"And what shall we do now?" said Mary Grant, when the first burst of emotion was over.

"First and foremost, you must bar me out," I cried. "Women, I'm a traitor to you; I've the Court of Session order in my pocket to turn you out, and if you once let that dell o' Spilster get his foot inside ye'll have hard work to get him out. So bar and steek your doors, and send off to Inverness for your man of business."

That was good, sound advice though it came from an enemy, and the women worked for a will and soon had the place in a state of defence. And Spilster and his men came up presently, and a wild rage he was in when he found I had been put outside! They were outside there in the wet and the cold for four-and-twenty hours, and then there came some kind of a writ from the Court of Session that made the Sheriff's men clear off. And the doors of Cancuspie were thrown wide open, and friends came pouring in from all round to wish the people joy. And I sneaked in with the rest, feeling that I had been a kind of double traitor. But Mary received me quite kindly, and when I went away she said to me:

"Was that in earnest you spoke the other night, Macie?"

"When I asked you to be my sweet-heart—oh, would you, Mary dear?" Mary nodded assent. "But," I said, "my dear, you have known so little of me"—for I did not want the dear creature to throw herself away.

Said Mary gently:

"I think my mother would not have come to you unless she had known you would be good to her bairn."

"Ay, ay," said my father, resorting to the sneeshin as usual in moments of emotion. "And so you're going to marry Mary Grant! Well, you may be lucky in love, for you're but a laggart in law."

#### ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT.

For particulars respecting Advertisement Spaces, address THE ADVERTISING MANAGER of "All the Year Round," No. 168, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

## TABLE OF EVENTS, 1892-1893.

### SEPTEMBER, 1892.

- 1.—Torquay celebrated its inauguration as a Corporation.  
Metropolitan Railway Extension to Aylesbury opened.
- 3.—News received of annexation of the Gilbert Islands, Oceania, by British cruiser "Royalist."
- 5.—Opening of Ninth International Congress of Orientalists in London University.  
Annual Meeting of the Trades Union Congress at Glasgow.
- 6.—The excursion steamer "Mona's Isle," from Dublin to Douglas, with 500 passengers, went ashore near Castletown, but all on board safely landed.
- 7.—The race for the St. Leger, for which eleven started, resulted in Baron de Hirsch running first and third with La Flèche and Watercress; Lord Bradford's Sir Hugo being second. Orme started a great favourite, but came in fifth only.
- 10.—Opening of Trafalgar Square Theatre.
- 17.—At Herne Hill, J. Wass and E. L. Newland covered 25 miles on a tandem safety in 1 hour 2 min. 9½ sec.; best on record.
- 19.—Southend-on-Sea, the latest created borough, celebrated reception of its charter with great public rejoicing.
- 21.—At Leicester, the Royal Handicap won by Rusticus, beating twenty-one others.
- 22.—Celebration in Paris of Centenary of French Republic.
- 24.—Lancashire Plate, value £10,000, won by La Flèche, twelve starting.
- 29.—Alderman Knill, a Roman Catholic, elected Lord Mayor for ensuing civic year.

### OCTOBER, 1892.

- 3.—Lord Houghton, the new Irish Viceroy, made his state entry into Dublin.
- 6.—Death of Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate, at Aldworth, his Surrey residence, aged 83.  
The two mile race on the Seine, near Paris, between a London Rowing Club eight and a French amateur crew, won by latter in 9 min. 21 sec.
- 8.—At Kempton Park, the new Duke of York Stakes of £5,000 won by Miss Dollar, who beat twenty-one others.
- 11.—In presence of a large, distinguished, and representative assemblage, the remains of Lord Tennyson interred in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.
- 12, 13.—At Newmarket, the Cesarewitch, in a field of twenty-eight, won by Burnaby, with Insurance and Brandy second and third; and the Middle Park Plate by Isinglass, beating Ravensbury, Le Nicham, and twelve others.
- 13.—Cirencester election resulted in Conservative

candidate being returned by majority of only three in a poll of 8,551.

- 16.—News received that the P. and O. steamship "Bokhara" had been wrecked on her voyage from Shanghai to Hong Kong, and 125 of her passengers and crew drowned.
- 19.—The "City of Paris" steamer made the voyage from Liverpool to New York in the unprecedented time of 6 days 2 hours 24 min., and from Queenstown in 5 days 14 hours 24 min., her average steaming being upwards of 20½ knots.  
Announcement by Home Secretary that public meetings would be allowed in Trafalgar Square on Saturdays, Sundays, and Bank Holidays, under regulations prepared by Commissioner of Works.
- 25.—Death at Washington of Mrs. Harrison, wife of President of United States.
- 26.—The Cambridgeshire won by La Flèche, with Pensioner and Jodel second and third. Thirty ran.
- 28.—British steamer "Roumania," from Liverpool to Bombay, totally lost on Portuguese coast, only nine of the 123 persons on board reaching the shore alive.

### NOVEMBER, 1892.

- 2.—By a collision between the Scotch express and a goods train, near Thirsk, ten persons were killed and many others seriously injured.  
In entering the Spanish port of Ferrol, with the rest of the Channel fleet, the ironclad "Howe" grounded on a reef, and sustained serious damage.
- 5.—The Military March Competition for Volunteers, Militia, and Regulars won by the team of 3rd V.B. East Surrey Regiment, who covered the fifty-four miles, in heavy marching order, in 17 hours 36 min.
- 8.—By explosion of a dynamite bomb, found in a Paris street, at the police-office where it had been taken, the building was wrecked and five officers killed.
- 9.—Fifty-first birthday of the Prince of Wales.  
Lord Mayor's Day. At the Guildhall banquet, in absence of Mr. Gladstone, Lord Kimberley made the political speech usual on the occasion.
- 10.—Mr. Cleveland elected President of the United States.
- 11.—Liverpool Cup won by Windgall.
- 23.—Inaugural ceremony of opening the London Chamber of Arbitration at the Guildhall performed by the Lord Mayor, in presence of a large and influential assemblage.  
Union Company's steamer "Scot" arrived at Plymouth from the Cape in 13 days 23 hours, beating her own record by 12 hours.
- 26.—Manchester November Handicap won by Paddy.

## DECEMBER, 1892.

- 1.—Official announcements that Major-General Sir George Stewart White had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in India, in succession to Lord Roberts; and that Sir Gerald Porter had been nominated Commissioner to Uganda.
- 3.—The Royal Italian Opera Company gave a performance of "Carmen" at Windsor Castle, before the Queen and Court.  
Mr. Gladstone presented with the freedom of City of Liverpool.
- 9.—Prince of Wales nominated Grand Master of English Freemasons for nineteenth time.
- 14.—By a fire which broke out in the Bamfurlong Colliery, near Wigan, fifteen miners perished.
- 24.—Lord Hawke's team of English cricketers defeated at Bombay by eleven Parsee gentlemen, who won by 109 runs.  
Dynamite explosion at detective offices, Dublin, by which a police officer was killed and great destruction of property occasioned.
- 26.—Bank Holiday, fine bright weather prevailing.
- 29.—Mr. Gladstone's eighty-third birthday.
- 31.—Return match at Bombay between the English and Parsee cricketers, won by former, but by seven runs only.

## JANUARY, 1893.

- 1.—The Lord Mayor of London visited Dublin in state, and received the freedom of the Irish metropolis.
- 2.—Very severe fighting at Ambigol between Egyptian troops and a largely superior Dervish force, who were defeated with great loss. Our casualties were fifty killed and wounded; Captain Pyne, of the Dorsetshire Regiment, being among the slain.
- 5.—At Lingley Fen, the National Skating Association's gold medal for skating a mile in three and a half minutes won, for the first time, by Mr. C. J. Aveling, who covered the distance in 3 min. 22½ sec.
- 7.—The court-martial at Devonport on Vice-Admiral Fairfax, commanding the Channel fleet, on the charge of hazarding Her Majesty's ships under his command by taking them into Ferrol harbour when the "Howe" struck on a reef, resulted, after a trial of over a week, in the Admiral being acquitted of blame.  
At Cardiff, in presence of 20,000 spectators, the International Rugby football match between England and Wales resulted, after a splendid struggle, in the Welshmen winning by twelve points to eleven.
- 10.—Marriage of Princess Marie, eldest daughter of Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, with Prince Ferdinand, Crown Prince of Roumania, solemnised at Sigmaringen with Royal pomp.  
By the sudden flooding of the Wheal Owless Mine, St. Just, Cornwall, nineteen men lost their lives.
- 16.—At Rome, Dr. Vaughan, Archbishop of

Westminster, and Dr. Logue, Archbishop of Armagh, created Cardinals by the Pope.

- 30.—The race for the Sculling Championship of England from Putney to Mortlake, between George Bubeare, of Hammersmith, and George Hosmer, of Boston, U.S.A., easily won by the Thames oarsman in 27 min. 25 sec.
- 31.—Meeting of both Houses of Parliament.

## FEBRUARY, 1893.

- 1.—Terrible earthquake in Island of Zante, attended with great loss of life and immense destruction of property, 10,000 persons being rendered destitute and homeless.
- 4.—Of the two International Rugby football matches played to-day, England defeated Ireland at Dublin by two tries to nil; while at Edinburgh, Wales followed up its recent success over England by decisively beating Scotland by a goal and three tries to nothing.
- 6.—Announcement that the great towns of Leeds and Sheffield had been raised to the rank of cities.  
The Cirencester Election Petition resulted in election being declared void, the number of valid votes given to each candidate having been found equal.  
Lord Tennyson's "Becket" produced at the Lyceum with very great success.
- 8.—Total loss of Anchor Line steamer "Trinacria" from Glasgow to Gibraltar, at Cape Villano, near Corunna, with four lady passengers and crew of thirty-seven on board, only seven of the latter reaching the shore alive.
- 9.—In House of Commons, Mr. Redmond's motion that fourteen prisoners undergoing penal servitude under the Treason Felony Act should have their sentences reconsidered, rejected by 397 to 81.  
M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, his son Charles, and three other Directors of the Panama Canal Company, convicted in Paris of misappropriation of funds in connection with that Company, and sentenced, the two former to five years' and the others to two years' imprisonment, in addition to considerable fines. M. de Lesseps is 90 years of age, a high officer of the Legion of Honour, and of world-wide renown as the projector of the Suez Canal. All the defendants appealed.
- 10.—By a conflagration which destroyed a County Lunatic Asylum in New Hampshire, U.S.A., fifty unfortunate lunatics perished, only three being saved.
- 13.—In a densely crowded House, Mr. Gladstone introduced the new Irish Home Rule Bill of the Government.
- 21.—Mr. Mellor, Q.C., elected Chairman of Committee of House of Commons.
- 24.—Waterloo Cup won by Mr. Cole's Character, Mr. Baxter's Button Park being the runner up. Colonel North's famous old dog Fullerton, winner of last four years, made a fifth attempt to carry off the trophy and started a strong favourite, but was beaten in second round.

**MARCH, 1893.**

- 4.—Inauguration of President Cleveland at Washington.  
At Leeds, under Rugby rules, Scotland defeated England by two goals to nothing.
- 4, 5.—By two subsidences at Sandgate, 200 houses were seriously injured, but, happily, no lives lost.
- 11.—Playing at Llanelly, the last of the Rugby International football matches—that between Wales and Ireland—won by the Welsh by a try to nothing, who thus secured the Rugby championship for the year.  
At Birmingham, the Ten Miles Amateur Pedestrian Championship easily won by Mr. Sid. Thomas, who defeated thirteen competitors by 600 yards, in 52 min. 4½ sec.
- 13.—London County Council elected Mr. John Hutton their Chairman, and Messrs. Harrison and Dickinson Vice-Chairman and Deputy-Chairman respectively.
- 18.—By "command," Mr. Irving's Lyceum Company gave a highly successful performance of "Becket" before the Queen and Court at Windsor.
- 20.—Departure of the Queen for Florence.
- 21.—Lincolnshire Handicap, for which twenty ran, won by Wolf's Crag, with Gangway and Marcion second and third.
- 22.—University Boat Race won by Oxford for fourth year in succession, in the unprecedented time of 18 min. 47 sec.
- 23.—The Inter-University Athletic Sports at West Kensington resulted in Oxford winning seven events out of nine.
- 24.—Liverpool Grand National won by Cloister, who defeated fourteen other starters, in 9 min. 42½ sec.; fastest time ever made.
- 27.—The "Howe," which grounded in entering Ferrol harbour in November, successfully floated.

**APRIL, 1893.**

- 3.—Easter Monday. Magnificent weather attended the first Bank holiday of the year, all places of public resort in and about London being filled with enormous crowds of holiday folks, upwards of 76,000 visiting the Crystal Palace alone. Railway and steamboat passenger traffic was also unprecedentedly great.  
Immense Unionist demonstration in Belfast on the occasion of Mr. Balfour's visit, a procession of nearly a hundred thousand persons marching through the streets. In the evening Mr. Balfour addressed a great and enthusiastic meeting in the Ulster Hall.
- 8.—Celebration of eight-hundredth anniversary of consecration of Winchester Cathedral.  
Mr. Balfour concluded his visit to Ireland by addressing a vast anti-Home Rule gathering in Dublin.
- 11.—By a terrible outburst of fire in the Great Western Colliery, near Pontypridd, sixty-three miners perished.
- 12.—At Epsom, after a splendid race, in which fourteen took part, the City and Suburban

won by King Charles, an outsider; the favourite, Windgall, being second, and Lady Hermit third.

- 13.—Serious rioting at Brussels, Mons, and other towns in Belgium, owing to rejection of Universal Suffrage by Constituent Assembly.
- 17.—Another severe earthquake in Zante, most of the buildings left standing after the recent catastrophe being destroyed, and more lives lost.
- 18.—In the Probate Court, Sir Francis Jeune, the President, sentenced the Dowager Duchess of Sutherland to pay a fine of £250, and to be imprisoned for six weeks, for serious contempt of Court, in destroying a letter which was among the documents to which she had been allowed access, "pendente lite," by direction of the Court.  
The great spot-barred billiard match for £2,000 played at the Egyptian Hall, in which John Roberts endeavoured to concede 9,000 out of 24,000 to C. Dawson, the second best player in England, ended by the champion being defeated by 1,993 points.

- 19.—Immense Primrose League meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, under presidency of Marquis of Salisbury, who delivered a powerful address against Irish Home Rule.

- 20.—Arrival in Rome of German Emperor and Empress on a visit to King and Queen of Italy.

Marriage in Florence of Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria to Princess Marie Louise, daughter of the Duke of Parma.

- 21.—In House of Commons, the second reading of the Irish Home Rule Bill carried by majority of 43, the numbers being 347 to 304. Fourteen members paired, these, the Speaker and four tellers, making up the full complement of the House.
- 22.—Silver wedding of King and Queen of Italy, celebrated in Rome and throughout the kingdom with great public rejoicings.

Immense and enthusiastic meeting at the Albert Hall, under presidency of Duke of Abercorn, attended by 1,200 delegates from Ulster, to protest against Irish Home Rule. The number of persons present officially stated at 11,300.

Serious rioting at Hull by the dockers on strike and large mobs of roughs, the streets being only at last cleared by repeated charges of police. In the afternoon a terrible fire broke out in the town, property to a very large amount being destroyed, and there was reason for grave suspicion that the conflagration was the work of incendiaries.

- 24.—In House of Commons the Chancellor of Exchequer made his budget statement, which showed that the estimated revenue for 1893-4 would fall short of expenditure by upwards of a million and a half, which he proposed to make up by imposing an additional penny on the Income Tax.

By the sudden fall of the heavy stone coping of a public-house and four adjacent houses in Peel Road, Kilburn, two women and a child were killed, and many other persons seriously injured.

At the great garden party at Hatfield, in honour of the Ulster delegates to London, the Marquis of Salisbury and other Unionist leaders delivered stirring speeches against the Home Rule Bill, which were rapturously received by the enthusiastic Irish visitors.

28.—Return of the Queen from Italy.

29.—Royal Academy Banquet, at which the Prince of Wales and Duke of Cambridge were present.

### MAY, 1893.

1.—Opening of the "World's Fair" at Chicago by President Cleveland, nearly half a million of spectators being present.

Official announcement of betrothal of Duke of York to Princess Mary of Teck.

In House of Commons, the Eight Hours (Miners') Bill read a second time.

3.—At Newmarket, the race for the Two Thousand Guineas had ten starters, and was won by the favourite, Mr. McCalmont's Isinglass, with Mr. Rose's Ravensbury and Duke of Portland's Raeburn second and third.

The Lord Mayor presided over a large and representative meeting of business men in the Guildhall to protest against Irish Home Rule.

Death of Sir J. Dormer, Commander-in-Chief at Madras, from injuries received from a tiger.

5.—The One Thousand Guineas race won by Sir J. Blundell Maple's Siffense, same owner's Dame President (the favourite) coming in second, and Lord Rosebery's Treasure third. Eleven started.

Arrival at Dover of Lord Roberts, late Commander-in-Chief in India, accompanied by Lady Roberts and their two daughters, who were presented with an address of welcome, and met with a most cordial reception.

Bomb explosion in one of the quadrangles of the Four Courts, Dublin, but beyond the smashing of a great number of windows, no damage was done. The day was the anniversary of the Phoenix Park assassinations in 1882.

The St. John's Ambulance Brigade of men working in Colonel Seely's collieries in Derbyshire and Notts, inspected by the Queen in Windsor Great Park.

Dissolution of German Reichstag by the Emperor, owing to rejection of Army Bill.

10.—In brilliant and true "Queen's weather" the Imperial Institute opened by Her Majesty in State, vast crowds thronging the line of procession.

The newly arrived Australian cricketers fared badly in their opening match at Lord Sheffield's park, against a fairly representative All England eleven, being defeated by eight wickets.

Chester Cup won by Dare Devil.

13.—By a fire which broke out at noon in Wych Street, Strand, two young children perished, four others being rescued with much difficulty.

Gardening and Forestry Exhibition, Earl's Court, opened by Duke of York.

Kempton Park Jubilee Stakes won by Orvieto, with May Duke and Simonian second and third. Eight others ran.

By a collision in a dense fog off Lundy Island between the steamers "City of Hamburg" and "Countess Evelyn," the latter was sunk and sixteen of her crew and eight passengers drowned.

16.—Great demonstration of influential and distinguished Churchmen, presided over by Archbishop of Canterbury, at the Albert Hall, to protest against the Dis-establishment of the Church in Wales.

17.—At the magnificent reception given by the Prince of Wales at the Imperial Institute, 25,000 ladies and gentlemen, representative of all parts of the Empire, were present.

Newmarket Stakes, for which seven started, easily won by Isinglass, Phocion and Ravensbury being second and third.

18.—Launch at Chiswick of H.M. first-class gunboat "Speedy," 810 tons, the first man-of-war and largest vessel ever built above London Bridge.

20.—End of great dock strike at Hull.

22.—Whit Monday. In the metropolis all pleasure resorts thronged with the usual thousands of holiday-makers, great crowds also taking advantage of the fine weather to visit the many places of interest easily reached by river, road, or rail.

Opening of International Miners' Congress at Brussels; of sixty-three delegates present, thirty-eight were from the United Kingdom.

Eighth annual parade of the London Cart-Horse Society in Regent's Park, witnessed by Prince and Princess of Wales and a great concourse of spectators.

24.—Seventy-fourth birthday of the Queen.

Lord Salisbury arrived at Belfast, where he received a right hearty welcome, and addressed a great gathering against the Irish Home Rule Bill.

The British Nurses' Association granted a Royal Charter of Incorporation by the Queen.

26.—The sailing match from Gravesend round the Mouse lightship and back won by Prince of Wales's new cutter yacht "Britannia," after a close race with Lord Dunraven's "Valkyrie," which came in second.

27.—Manchester Cup won by Shancrotha, beating thirteen others.

Lord Salisbury visited Londonderry, and was most enthusiastically received.

31.—In brilliant weather and in presence of an immense gathering, the Derby won by Mr. McCalmont's Isinglass, who defeated Mr. Rose's Ravensbury, Duke of Portland's Raeburn, and eight others, in 2 min. 43 sec.; equal to best previous record time.

### JUNE, 1893.

2.—The race for the Oaks, for which seventeen ran, resulted in the victory of Duke of Portland's Mrs. Butterwick, with Treasure and Cyprian second and third.

3.—The International Spot-barred Billiard Match for £1,000, between J. Roberts and Frank Ives, Champion of America, 6,000

up, won by the American by dint of two extraordinary runs of cannons on balls jammed against the corner pockets; Roberts's total only reaching 3,821.

4.—Paris Grand Steeplechase won by the English horse Skedaddle, seven starting.

8.—Parliamentary Golf Handicap won by Hon. T. W. Legh, M.P.

9.—By the sudden collapse of an old theatre in Washington, which had been converted into Government offices, thirty employés were killed and numerous others badly injured. It was in this theatre that President Lincoln was assassinated.

Mr. Reckitt, M.P. for Pontefract, unseated on petition, bribery by an agent having been proved.

Lieutenant-General Sir J. Hudson, Commander-in-Chief at Bombay, thrown from his horse at Poona and killed on the spot.

Mr. G. Mills accomplished the remarkable feat of tricycling from Land's End to John o' Groat's in 3 days 16 hours 47 min., beating bicycling record by 7 hours.

10.—Fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Crystal Palace by the Queen.

11.—Grand Prix de Paris won by Ragotski; Ravensbury, the only English horse who competed, being a close second.

12.—International Firemen's Exhibition at Agricultural Hall; nearly 300 fire brigades, English, Foreign, and Colonial, represented.

13-16.—At Ascot, the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by Red Ensign; Ascot Stakes by Enniskillen; Royal Hunt Cup by Amandier; Gold Cup by Marcion; and the rich Hardwicke Stakes by Watercress.

15.—The Mayors of Manchester and Liverpool received official notification that from henceforth the title of Lord Mayor had been granted to the holders of the office.

The P. and O. steamer "Himalaya" arrived at Adelaide in 26 days 6 hours; fastest passage ever made.

In Paris, the Court of Cassation quashed the convictions of M. Ch. de Lesseps and other Directors of the Panama Canal Company of February last. The verdict against the elder M. de Lesseps had never been put in force.

17.—At Herne Hill, Sanger, the American champion bicyclist, beat world's record by covering a mile in 2 min. 10½ sec.

22.—Safe arrival of the ironclad "Howe" at Sheerness from Ferrol.

Terrible naval disaster in the Mediterranean, the splendid flagship "Victoria," one of our grandest and most powerful battle-ships, having been sunk in deep water off the coast of Syria by collision with the "Camperdown," another great ironclad, which also sustained considerable damage. Of a total of 650 persons on board the sunken war-vessel, as many as 358 perished, the loss including the gallant and distinguished Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, Commander-in-Chief on the station. The greatest grief was everywhere manifested for what was felt to be nothing less than a national calamity.

28.—The Queen unveiled in Kensington Gardens a marble statue of herself, depicting her as she was at the time of her accession,

admirably executed by her daughter, Princess Louise of Lorne.

29.—The Rev. Isaac Olumoli and the Rev. C. Phillips, African negroes, consecrated as Assistant Bishops for Western Equatorial Africa, in St. Paul's Cathedral, by Archbishop of Canterbury.

### JULY, 1893.

3.—Calamitous colliery explosion at Thornhill, near Dewsbury; 139 miners perishing, and numerous wives and children left destitute. University cricket match won by Cambridge by 266 runs.

Mr. Meintjes, the South African cyclist, covered 24 miles 380 yards at Herne Hill in an hour, a record bicycle performance.

6.—Marriage of Duke of York, only son of Prince and Princess of Wales, to Princess Mary of Teck, in Chapel Royal, St. James's. The Queen, King and Queen of Denmark, the parents of bride and bridegroom, all the members of the Royal Family, as well as numerous representatives of foreign Sovereigns, were present, the ceremony being conducted with all the pomp and splendour attached to a State function of the highest order. Vast and enthusiastic multitudes witnessed the bridal processions, and at night the metropolis was brilliantly illuminated.

8.—The King and Queen of Denmark, accompanied by the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Czarewitch, and many other Royal persons, visited the Guildhall, where they received an address of welcome and were entertained at luncheon by the Lord Mayor, 700 guests being present.

At the Oval, Gentlemen defeated by Players by eight runs.

By the capsizing of a pleasure-boat in a sudden squall off Skegness, Lincolnshire, twenty-nine men, out of the thirty-two on board, were drowned. Most of the victims were employés of the North London Railway Company, on their annual seaside excursion, many leaving wives and families.

10.—Great fire at the World's Fair, Chicago, and many lives lost.

12.—Gentlemen v. Players' return match at Lord's drawn, owing to rain.

Official announcement that a baronetcy had been conferred on the Lord Mayor, and knighthoods on the Sheriffs.

14.—Both Houses of Parliament voted addresses of congratulation to the Queen, Prince and Princess of Wales, and Duke and Duchess of York, on the Royal marriage; the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs attending at Windsor and presenting to Her Majesty a similar address from the City.

Eclipse Stakes won by Orme, six running.

15.—At Lord's, Eton beat Harrow by nine wickets.

16.—German Army Bill carried in new Reichstag by majority of sixteen.

By "command," the Royal Italian Opera Company gave a performance at Windsor Castle of "Cavalleria Rusticana," and second act of "L'Amico Fritz."

18.—Extensive fire in City, thirty warehouses being destroyed in St. Mary Axe.

- 19.—The first representative match between All England and Australians, played at Lord's, abandoned, owing to rain on last day.  
Wingfield Sculls won by G. Kennedy, beating V. Nickalls, the holder.
  - 20.—Gatwick Golden Handicap won by Cabin Boy.  
Foundation stone of new Deep Harbour, Dover, laid by Prince of Wales.
  - 21.—Liverpool Cup won by Simonian.
  - 22.—The annual twenty-four hours' cycling race at Herne Hill, for which eighteen started, won by F. W. Shorland, the holder, who covered 426½ miles—a world's record.  
At Bisley, the Queen's Prize of £250, with gold badge and medal, won by Sergeant Davies, 1st Welsh.
  - International lawn tennis match between England and Ireland, played at Wimbledon, won by former by nine to six.
  - 25.—Celebration of five-hundredth anniversary of Winchester College, at which Prince of Wales and Duke of Connaught took part.
  - 25-28.—At Goodwood, the Stewards' Cup won by Medora; the Goodwood Stakes by Red Eyes; Sussex Stakes by Harbinger; Cup by Barmecide; and Gordon Stakes by Orme.
  - 27.—French blockade of Siamese coast declared. The court-martial assembled at Malta to enquire into the circumstances attending the sinking of the "Victoria," found that the catastrophe was solely due to an order from the Commander-in-Chief, and acquitted Captain Bourke and the other survivors of any blame.  
G. E. Osmond bicycled 25 miles at Herne Hill in record time of 60 min. 4 sec.  
Unprecedented scene in House of Commons at conclusion of Committee Stage of Home Rule Bill, when an actual free fight took place, blows being freely exchanged by several hon. members to an accompaniment of loud and persistent hissing from the Strangers' Gallery!
  - 28.—Solomon Islands placed under British Protectorate.  
Beginning of an extensive coal strike, very many thousand men having ceased work in England and Wales.
  - 29.—Arrival of German Emperor at Cowes. Siamese Government's acceptance of French ultimatum announced from Bangkok. State visits of Lord Mayors of London and Dublin to Edinburgh.
- AUGUST, 1893.**
- 1.—Royal Yacht Squadron Queen's Cup won by German Emperor's "Meteor," the "Valkyrie"—which came in first—having been disqualified by passing wrong side of the Nab Light.  
R. and J. Ilsley beat the 25 miles' tandem safety record by riding the distance at Herne Hill in 60 min. 31½ sec.  
In the match at Portsmouth between the Australians and Oxford and Cambridge (Past and Present), the former ran up the extraordinary total of 843 in their first innings, which extended into the third day; an unprecedented performance in first-class cricket.  
At Cowes, Prince of Wales's "Britannia" won the Challenge Shield presented by German Emperor.
  - 4.—Mansion House "Victoria" Relief Fund closed, the amount received exceeding £62,000.  
Annual meeting of the National Artillery Association at Shoeburyness.
  - 5.—Corinth Canal opened by King of Greece.
  - 7.—Brilliant weather again favoured Bank holiday folks, and all places of amusement thronged.  
German Emperor left Cowes for Heligoland. By the capsizing of a pleasure-boat at Port Talbot, South Wales, twenty-two persons, mostly women and children, were drowned.
  - 10.—Pezon's menagerie destroyed by fire at Royan, in France; all the lions, tigers, and other large animals, fifty in number, perishing in the flames.
  - 12.—Calamitous accident on Taff Vale Railway, near Pontypridd, twelve passengers being killed and many others badly injured.
  - 12-15.—Serious religious riots between Mohomedans and Hindoos at Bombay, which a large military force was required to suppress, many lives being lost.
  - 15.—Arbitration award in the Behring Sea seal fisheries dispute with the United States delivered in Paris, in all essential points favourable to Great Britain.
  - 16.—The second of the three matches between the Australians and a representative eleven of All England, played at the Oval, ended in the Colonists being defeated by an innings and 43 runs.
  - 17.—At Herne Hill, G. E. Osmond bicycled two miles in 4 min. 25½ sec., a best on record.
  - 18.—Ninety-five degrees shade temperature registered at Greenwich.
  - 19.—The mile swimming race for £500 and Championship of the World, between J. Nuttall, champion of England, and J. McCusker, an American, in Hollingworth Lake, easily won by Nuttall, in the record time of 26 min. 8 sec.
  - 22.—Death of the reigning Duke of Saxe-Coburg, brother-in-law of the Queen; his nephew, the Duke of Edinburgh, succeeding to the Ducal throne.
  - 23.—Ebor Handicap won by Senaputty.
  - 25.—G. E. Osmond and R. G. Merry rode a mile on a tandem bicycle at Herne Hill in the splendid time of 2 min. 7½ sec.; a record.
  - 26.—The last of the three matches between the Australians and a representative All England Eleven, played at Manchester, ended in a very even draw.
  - 28.—At Herne Hill, J. W. Stocks, Hull B.C., accomplished the marvellous performance of bicycling 25 miles in 59 min. 31½ sec.; and, going on, covered another 360 yards within the hour, beating world's record.  
Terrible cyclone in Georgia and other Southern States, many hundred persons being killed, and property of enormous value destroyed.
  - 31.—The close of the first-class cricket season left Yorkshire champion county with nine points, five ahead of Lancashire, which ranked next.

## OBITUARY FOR 1892-1893.

On the 7th September died JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, the American Quaker poet, whose "Songs of Freedom" helped on the Abolitionist cause, and whose stirring battle poems during the War of Secession sustained the enthusiasm of the winning side. On the 16th of the same month died CARDINAL HOWARD, one of the old historic family, in his sixty-fifth year.

On the 2nd October died the distinguished French littérateur, ERNEST RENAN, whose "Origins of Christianity" was, perhaps, more widely read in its English translation even than in the original. And the 6th of the same month was notable for the death of ALFRED TENNYSON, chief of the English poets of his period, who was born on the 5th August, 1809. On the following day died THOMAS WOOLNER, sculptor and poet, early allied with the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, born on the 17th December, 1825. On the 24th October died Mrs. W. H. (JANET) WILLS, sister of William and Robert Chambers, aged eighty-one years.

The 11th November witnessed the death at Budleigh Salterton of T. A. TROLLOPE, novelist and littérateur, brother of the more famous Anthony, in his eighty-second year. On the 9th November died the eighth DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH, in his forty-ninth year, who, with considerable capacities, rendered himself rather notorious than famous. On the 23rd of the same month died WILLIAM O'CONNOR, the famous Canadian oarsman. November, too, witnessed the death of Miss SOPHIE EYRE, an actress of some repute.

The dramatic world also had to regret the loss, on the 7th December, of FRED LESLIE, an excellent burlesque actor, in his thirty-sixth year. On the 18th occurred the death of SIR RICHARD OWEN, the eminent anatomist and man of science, aged eighty-eight years. And the 23rd of the same month was marked by the death of MONTAGU WILLIAMS, Q.C., in his fifty-eighth year, eminent as an advocate, and in latter years a popular police magistrate, and a genial occasional essayist. The name of SIR J. BERNARD BURKE, Ulster King-at-Arms, who died on the 13th December, aged seventy-seven, recalls achievements in the field of literature, with the congenial subject of the "Romance of the Peerage." The month of December also witnessed the death, on the 2nd, of JAY GOULD, the "Giant Jobber" of America; on the 5th, of CHARLES WORDSWORTH, Bishop of St. Andrew's, one of the poet's family; on the 13th, of WILLIE BECKWITH, the famous swimmer, and on the 23rd, of MISS WADMAN, a favourite burlesque actress.

The year 1893 opened with the death, on the 8th January, of the popular novelist, HAWLEY SMART, at Budleigh Salterton, in his sixtieth year. And the 13th saw the death of the veteran actress and public reader, Mrs. FANNY KEMBLE, whose name recalls the triumphs of an earlier age, and who was born eighty-five years ago. Less known, but in his way a remarkable man, was DR. PRICE, of Llantrissant, who was "out"

with the Chartists in his earlier years, and latterly assumed the character of an Arch-Druid, and who died on the 23rd, in his ninety-third year. In January also, on the 4th, passed away WILLIAM J. PALMER, of biscuit fame, and the benefactor in many other ways of Reading. And on the 11th died GENERAL BUTLER, one of the most unpopular of the Northern commanders in the American War of Secession.

A warrior of a different stamp was the chivalrous GENERAL BEAUREGARD, of the Southern army, who died in the following month of February, in his seventy-fifth year. On the 6th February died LORD BRABOURNE, not of much note as a politician, but who, as Knatchbull-Hugessen, acquired some reputation as a story-teller in the land of faëry. The 21st was marked by the death of JOHN PETTIE, R.A., in his fifty-fourth year, and on the following day died WILLIAM HAZLITT, at the ripe age of eighty-three, son of the noted critic of the same name, and himself an occasional annotator in literary chronicles. And we may also record the death on the 2nd February of TIM CARTER, probably the last of the old school of stage-coachmen, who had attained the eighty-eighth year of his age.

In March died WILLIAM MINRO, journalist and professor, aged forty-nine; and on the 5th, HIPPOLITE ADOLPHE TAINE, in his fifty-fifth year, the eminent French critic and literary historian. And on the 27th died the former champion of the cue, JOHN ROBERTS the elder, once facile princeps at the billiard-table, in his seventieth year.

On the 6th April died VICAT COLE, R.A., aged sixty, the admired artist of so many charming scenes in Surrey lanes, or along Thames side. And the 19th witnessed the death of J. ADDINGTON SYMONDS, an eminent essayist, in his fifty-third year. On the 21st died at Knowsley, in his sixty-seventh year, the EARL OF DERBY, son of the famous Prime Minister, the Rupert of debate, and who himself held the seals of a Secretary of State, both in his father's and Lord Beaconsfield's administrations.

The 9th May witnessed the death of SIR JAMES ANDERSON, aged sixty-nine, the commander of the "Great Eastern," who successfully laid the earliest Atlantic cable, and who was connected with many of the great marine Telegraph Companies.

In July died DR. RAE, the eminent Arotic explorer.

And on the 8th August died Mrs. JOHN NELSON, once famous as Carlotta Leclercq, who sustained leading rôles with Charles Kean and Charles Fechter. On the 22nd August passed away ERNEST II., Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and brother of the late Prince Consort, whose death will be noticeable in our annals, as it involves the transference of the Duke of Edinburgh, recently a popular naval commander, to the chieftainship of a foreign State.



## CALENDAR FOR 1894.

## JANUARY.

1	M	Edward Burke born, 1780; died, 1797.
2	T	General Wolfe born, 1727; killed, 1759.
3	W	Josiah Wedgwood died, 1795; born, 1730.
4	Th	Roger Ascham died, 1568.
5	F	General Chanzy died, 1888.
6	S	Epiphany.
7	S	1st Sunday after Epiphany.
8	M	Duke of Clarence born, 1864; died, 1892.
9	T	W. P. Frith born, 1819.
10	W	Archbishop Laud beheaded, 1645.
11	Th	Sir Hans Sloane died, 1758.
12	F	Auguste Comte born, 1798.
13	S	St. Hilary.
14	S	2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
15	M	Molière born, 1622; died, 1673.
16	T	Edmund Spenser died, 1599; born, 1558.
17	W	Benjamin Franklin born, 1706; died, 1790.
18	Th	Lord Lytton, novelist, died, 1878.
19	F	James Watt born, 1736; died, 1819.
20	S	David Garrick died, 1779.
21	S	Septuagesima.
22	M	Lord Byron, poet, born, 1788; died, 1824.
23	T	Coquelin aîné born, 1841.
24	W	Frederick the Great born, 1712.
25	Th	Conversion of St. Paul.
26	F	C. J. Bernadotte born, 1768.
27	S	William II. Emperor of Germany born, 1859.
28	S	Sexagesima.
29	M	John C. Horsley, R.A., born, 1817.
30	T	Walter Savage Landor born, 1775.
31	W	Ben Jonson born, 1574; died, 1637.

## MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	New Moon	..	3A.	7m.	Morning.
15th.	First Quarter	..	0	9	Morning.
21st.	Full Moon	..	3	11	Afternoon.
28th.	Last Quarter	..	4	61	Afternoon.

## FEBRUARY.

1	Th	George Cruikshank died, 1878.
2	F	Purification.
3	S	Marquis of Salisbury born, 1830.
4	S	Quinquagesima.
5	M	Thomas Carlyle died, 1881.
6	T	Henry Irving born, 1838.
7	W	Ash Wednesday. Charles Dickens b. 1812.
8	Th	Samuel Butler, poet, born, 1612.
9	F	Sir Evelyn Wood born, 1848.
10	S	Queen Victoria married, 1840.
11	S	1st Sunday in Lent.
12	M	Charles Darwin born, 1809.
13	T	Cardinal Howard born, 1829; died, 1892.
14	W	St. Valentine.
15	Th	Mrs. Casbel Hoey born, 1830.
16	F	Edwd. Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, born, 1608; died, 1674.
17	S	Battle of Meenase, 1843. [died, 1674.]
18	S	2nd Sunday in Lent.
19	M	Richard Cumberland born, 1732; died, 1811.
20	T	Voltaire born, 1694; died, 1778.
21	W	Meissonier born, 1815.
22	Th	Jas. Russell Lowell born, 1819; died, 1891.
23	F	Sir Joshua Reynolds died, 1792.
24	S	St. Matthias, Apostle and Martyr.
25	S	3rd Sunday in Lent.
26	M	Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria born, 1861.
27	T	Joseph Ernest Renan born, 1829; died, 1892.
28	W	Michel de Montaigne born, 1533.

## MOON'S PHASES.

5th.	New Moon	..	9A.	45m.	Afternoon.
13th.	First Quarter	..	10	43	Morning.
20th.	Full Moon	..	2	16	Morning.
27th.	Last Quarter	..	0	28	Afternoon.

## MARCH.

1	Th	St. David's Day.
2	F	Pope Leo XIII. born, 1810.
3	S	Edmund Waller born, 1606.
4	S	4th Sunday in Lent.
5	M	Sir H. A. Layard born, 1817.
6	T	Michael Angelo born, 1474; died, 1563.
7	W	Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A., born, 1802; died, 1873.
8	Th	Battle of Aboukir, 1801.
9	F	Hamo Thornycroft, sculptor, born, 1850.
10	S	Edwd. O'Connor Terry born, 1844.
11	S	5th Sunday in Lent.
12	M	John Lawrence Toole born, 1830.
13	T	Battle of Tamai, 1884.
14	W	King Humbert of Ita'y born, 1844.
15	Th	Lord Melbourne born, 1779; died, 1848.
16	F	Duchess of Kent died, 1861.
17	S	St. Patrick's Day.
18	S	Palm Sunday.
19	M	Sir Richard Burton born, 1821; died, 1890.
20	T	Edwd. Jno. Poynter, R.A., born, 1836.
21	W	Henry Kirke White, poet, born, 1785; died, 1806.
22	Th	Battle of Totrek, Suakim, 1885.
23	F	Good Friday.
24	S	Thos. Spencer Baynes, LL.D., born, 1823.
25	S	Easter Day. Lady Day.
26	M	Bank Holiday.
27	T	Sir G. J. Elvey, Mus. Doc., born, 1816.
28	W	Declaration of War with Russia, 1854.
29	Th	Marshal Soult born, 1789; died, 1841.
30	F	Don Carlos born, 1848.
31	S	Slave Trade Abolished, 1806.

## MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	New Moon	..	2h.	18m.	Afternoon.
14th.	First Quarter	..	6	28	Afternoon.
21st.	Full Moon	..	2	11	Afternoon.
29th.	Last Quarter	..	8	28	Morning.

## APRIL.

1	S	Low Sunday.
2	M	Capture of Richmond & Virginia by Fede-
3	T	Washington Irving born, 1783. [rais, 1865.]
4	W	Oliver Goldsmith died, 1774.
5	Th	Algernon Chas. Swinburne born, 1837.
6	F	Raphael born, 1483; died, 1520.
7	S	William Wordsworth born, 1770.
8	S	2nd Sunday after Easter.
9	M	Battle of Palestina, 1849.
10	T	Battle of Toulouse, 1814.
11	W	George Canning born, 1770.
12	Th	Edw. Bird, R.A., born, 1762; died, 1819.
13	F	Dr. Chas. Burney died, 1814.
14	S	President Lincoln assassinated, 1865.
15	S	3rd Sunday after Easter.
16	M	Battle of Culloden, 1746.
17	T	Vicat Cole, R.A., born, 1833; died, 1893.
18	W	Dr. Erasmus Darwin died, 1802.
19	Th	Primrose Day.
20	F	King Charles of Roumania born, 1839.
21	S	H. A. Taine born, 1828; died, 1893.
22	S	4th Sunday after Easter.
23	M	William Shakespeare born, 1564; died, 1616.
24	T	Daniel Defoe died, 1731. [St. George.]
25	W	St. Mark, Evangelist and Martyr.
26	Th	Magellan killed, 1521.
27	F	Edward Gibbon born, 1737; died, 1794.
28	S	Chas. Cotton, poet, born, 1690; died, 1687.
29	S	Rogation Sunday.
30	M	Duke of Argyle born, 1823.

## MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	New Moon	..	4A.	0m.	Morning.
13th.	First Quarter	..	0	33	Morning.
20th.	Full Moon	..	3	2	Morning.
28th.	Last Quarter	..	8	20	Morning.

## MAY.

1	T	SS. Philip and James.
2	W	Dr. E. C. Brewer born, 1810.
3	Th	Ascension Day.
4	F	Sir Thomas Lawrence born, 1769; died, 1830.
5	S	Harrison Weir born, 1824.
6	S	Sunday after Ascension.
7	M	Robert Browning born, 1812; died, 1889.
8	T	Prince Albrecht, Regent of Brunswick, born
9	W	Napoleon Consul for life, 1803. [1837.
10	Th	Professor Calderwood Henry born, 1830.
11	F	Earl Granville born, 1815.
12	S	H. M. S. <i>Tiger</i> destroyed at Odessa, 1854.
13	S	Whit Sunday.
14	M	Bank Holiday.
15	T	Daniel O'Connell died, 1847.
16	W	Duke of Rutland born, 1815.
17	Th	George Barnett Smith, F.R.G.S., born, 1841.
18	F	Peter Cunningham died, 1869.
19	S	Professor Wilson born, 1785.
20	S	Trinity Sunday.
21	M	Edward Hull, F.R.S., born, 1824.
22	T	Bombardment of Gustafs-vaern, 1854.
23	W	Princess Elizabeth Bourbon born, 1764; executed, 1794.
24	Th	Corpus Christi. Queen's birthday.
25	F	Princess Helena born, 1846.
26	S	Duchess of York born, 1867.
27	S	1st Sunday after Trinity.
28	M	William Pitt born, 1759; died, 1806.
29	T	Restoration of King Charles II., 1660.
30	W	Alexander Pope died, 1744. [1854.
31	Th	Destruction of <i>Europa</i> , troopship, by fire,

## MOON'S PHASES.

5th.	New Moon	..	24.	41m.	Afternoon.
12th.	First Quarter	..	6	21	Morning.
19th.	Full Moon	..	4	43	Afternoon.
27th.	Last Quarter	..	8	4	Afternoon.

## JULY.

1	S	6th Sunday after Trinity.
2	M	George D. Leslie, R.A., born, 1835.
3	T	Battle of Sadowa, 1866.
4	W	Declaration of Independence, U.S., 1776.
5	Th	Battle of Carthage, U.S., 1861.
6	F	Earl of Pembroke born, 1850.
7	S	W. Mulready, R.A., died, 1863.
8	S	7th Sunday after Trinity.
9	M	Thomas Hayter Lewis, F.S.A., born, 1818.
10	T	Captain Marryat born, 1792; died, 1848.
11	W	Bombardment of Alexandria.
12	Th	Battle of Aghrim, 1691.
13	F	Marshal MacMahon born, 1808.
14	S	Archbishop of Canterbury born, 1829.
15	S	8th Sunday after Trinity.
16	M	Sir Joshua Reynolds born, 1723; died, 1792.
17	T	Franco-German War began, 1870.
18	W	Francois Petrarch died, 1374.
19	Th	J. Martin, artist, born, 1789.
20	F	Hyacinth Rigaud born, 1659; died, 1748.
21	S	Battle of Bull's Run, U.S., 1861.
22	S	9th Sunday after Trinity.
23	M	Duke of Devonshire born, 1833.
24	T	Window Tax abolished, 1861.
25	W	St. James, Apostle and Martyr. Rt. Hon.
26	Th	St. Anne. [A. J. Balfour born, 1848.
27	F	Battle of Talavera, 1809.
28	S	<i>Alabama</i> sailed from River Mersey, 1832.
29	S	10th Sunday after Trinity.
30	M	Samuel Rogers born, 1768; died, 1855.
31	T	Richard Savage, poet, died, 1743.

## MOON'S PHASES.

3rd.	New Moon	..	5th.	45m.	Morning.
9th.	First Quarter	..	10	15	Afternoon.
17th.	Full Moon	..	10	8	Afternoon.
25th.	Last Quarter	..	9	7	Afternoon.

## JUNE.

1	F	Engagement between <i>Chesapeake</i> and <i>Shan-</i>
2	S	Thomas Hardy born, 1840. [non, 1818.
3	S	2nd Sunday after Trinity.
4	M	Battle of Magenta, 1859.
5	T	Counts Egmont and Horn executed, 1568.
6	W	Jean B. L. Say born, 1826.
7	Th	Marshal Canrobert born, 1809.
8	F	Sir Samuel White Baker born, 1821.
9	S	Georgina Duchess of Devon born, 1767.
10	S	3rd Sunday after Trinity.
11	M	George Withers, poet, born, 1588; died, 1667.
12	T	William Cullen Bryant died, 1878.
13	W	Duc de Broglie born, 1821.
14	Th	Battle of Marengo, 1800.
15	F	German Emperor Frederick died, 1888.
16	S	Battle of Quatre Bras, 1815.
17	S	4th Sunday after Trinity.
18	M	Battle of Waterloo.
19	T	Sir Joseph Banks died, 1820.
20	W	Queen's Accession.
21	Th	Marquis Dufferin born, 1826.
22	F	Great fire in Tooley Street, 1861.
23	S	General Cluseret born, 1823.
24	S	5th Sunday after Trinity. St. John Baptist.
25	M	Midsummer Day.
26	T	H. C. E. Childers born, 1827.
27	W	Rev. Gilbert White died, 1793. [1891.
28	Th	Charles Stewart Parnell born, 1846; died,
29	F	Coronation Day.
30	S	St. Peter, Apostle and Martyr. [1841.
		Great Western Railway opened to Bristol,

## MOON'S PHASES.

3rd.	New Moon	..	10th.	56m.	Afternoon.
10th.	First Quarter	..	1	14	Afternoon.
18th.	Full Moon	..	7	6	Morning.
26th.	Last Quarter	..	10	8	Morning.

## AUGUST.

1	W	West Indian slaves freed, 1834.
2	Th	Enghien, Louis Henry de Bourbon, born,
		1772; executed, 18 4.
3	F	Sir Frederick Peel born, 1829.
4	S	Battle of Weissenbourg, 1870.
5	S	11th Sunday after Trinity.
6	M	Daniel O'Connell born, 1775.
7	T	Archdeacon Farrar, D.D., born, 1831.
8	W	George Canning died, 1827.
9	Th	John Dryden born, 1631; died, 1700.
10	F	Rt. Hon. J. G. Goschen born, 1831.
11	S	Dr. Richard Mead born, 1678; died, 1754.
12	S	12th Sunday after Trinity.
13	M	Lord Escher born, 1817.
14	T	Richard Jefferies, author, died, 1887.
15	W	Sir Walter Scott born, 1771; died, 1832.
16	Th	Battle of Tchernaya, 1855.
17	F	Thomas Stothard, R.A., born, 1755; died,
18	S	Battle of Gravelotte, 1870. [1834.
19	S	13th Sunday after Trinity.
20	M	Robert Herrick born, 1591.
21	T	F. Michelet, historian, born, 1798; died, 1874.
22	W	W. C. Hazlitt born, 1834; died, 1893.
23	Th	Baron Cuvier born, 1769; died, 1832.
24	F	St. Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr.
25	S	Battle of Cressy, 1346.
26	S	14th Sunday after Trinity.
27	M	Duke of Teck born, 1837.
28	T	Battle of Kassassin.
29	W	Oliver Wendell Holmes born, 1809.
30	Th	Battle of Plevna, 1877.
31	F	John Bunyan died, 1688.

## MOON'S PHASES.

1st.	New Moon	..	0th.	24m.	Afternoon.
8th.	First Quarter	..	10	5	Morning.
16th.	Full Moon	..	1	17	Afternoon.
24th.	Last Quarter	..	5	40	Morning.
30th.	New Moon	..	8	4	Afternoon.

## SEPTEMBER.

1	S	Partridge Shooting begins.
2	S	15th Sunday after Trinity.
3	M	Lord Halsbury born, 1825.
4	T	French Republic proclaimed, 1870.
5	W	Cardinal Richelieu born, 1585; died, 1642.
6	Th	Shakespeare's Jubilee at Stratford, 1709.
7	F	Comte de Buffon born, 1707.
8	S	Amy Robsart killed, 1580.
9	S	16th Sunday after Trinity.
10	M	Mary Godwin died, 1797.
11	T	Professor Everett born, 1831.
12	W	Marquis of Bute born, 1847.
13	Th	Battle of Tel-el-Kebir, 1882.
14	F	Holy Cross Day.
15	S	Ernest Crofts, A.R.A., born, 1847. Eclipse of Moon, partly visible at Greenwich.
16	S	17th Sunday after Trinity.
17	M	Frederick Goodall, R.A., born, 1822.
18	T	Dr. Gilbert Burnet born, 1643; died, 1715.
19	W	Battle of Poitiers, 1356.
20	Th	Sir Edward J. Reed born, 1880.
21	F	St. Matthew.
22	S	James Thomson, poet, born, 1700; died, 1748.
23	S	18th Sunday after Trinity.
24	M	Samuel Butler died, 1680.
25	T	W. M. Rossetti born, 1839.
26	W	Thos. Sidney Cooper, R.A., born, 1808.
27	Th	George Cruikshank born, 1792; died, 1878.
28	F	Straabourg Capitulated, 1870.
29	S	St. Michael and All Angels. Michaelmas
30	S	19th Sunday after Trinity. [Day.]

## MOON'S PHASES.

7th.	First Quarter ..	1h. 3m. Morning.
15th.	Full Moon ..	4 21 Morning.
22nd.	Last Quarter ..	0 32 Afternoon.
29th.	New Moon ..	5 44 Morning.

## NOVEMBER.

1	Th	All Saints' Day.
2	F	All Souls'.
3	S	Hicks Pasha & Egyptian Army destroyed, 1883.
4	S	24th Sunday after Trinity.
5	M	Battle of Inkerman, 1854.
6	T	Colley Clobber born, 1671; died, 1757.
7	W	Battle of Fruges, 1620.
8	Th	Edmund Halley, astronomer, born, 1656.
9	F	Lord Mayor's Day. Prince of Wales born.
10	S	Martin Luther born, 1483; died, 1546.
11	S	25th Sunday after Trinity.
12	M	Battle of Sheriffmuir, 1715.
13	T	Sir John Moore born, 1761; killed, 1809.
14	W	Sir Chas. Lyell born, 1797; died, 1875.
15	Th	Edwin Booth, actor, born, 1838; died, 1893.
16	F	John Bright born, 1811; died, 1889.
17	S	Queen Charlotte died, 1818.
18	S	26th Sunday after Trinity.
19	M	Ferdinand de Lesseps born, 1805.
20	T	Thomas Chatterton born, 1752; died, 1770.
21	W	James Clarke Hooke, R.A., born, 1819.
22	Th	Justin McCarthy born, 1880.
23	F	Perkin Warbeck executed, 1499.
24	S	John Knox died, 1572.
25	S	27th Sunday after Trinity.
26	M	William Cowper born, 1731; died, 1800.
27	T	Duchess of Teck born, 1888.
28	W	Leslie Stephen born, 1882.
29	Th	Maria Theresa died, 1780.
30	F	St. Andrew, Apostle and Martyr.

## MOON'S PHASES.

5th.	First Quarter ..	3h. 16m. Afternoon.
13th.	Full Moon ..	7 49 Morning.
20th.	Last Quarter ..	2 8 Morning.
27th.	New Moon ..	8 54 Morning.

## OCTOBER.

1	M	Battle of Volturno, 1860.
2	T	Major André executed, 1780.
3	W	Valentine Green, engraver, born, 1739.
4	Th	Marquis of Ripon born, 1827. [1893.]
5	F	John Addington Symonds born, 1840; died, 1893.
6	S	Madame Campan born, 1752; died, 1822.
7	S	20th Sunday after Trinity.
8	M	Great Fire at Chicago, 1871.
9	T	Harriet Hosmer, sculptor, born, 1830.
10	W	Benjamin West, artist, born, 1738; died, 1820.
11	Th	Battle of Camperdown, 1797.
12	F	Pekin captured, 1860.
13	S	Murat, King of Naples, shot, 1815.
14	S	21st Sunday after Trinity.
15	M	Allan Ramsay, poet, born, 1686.
16	T	Houses of Parliament burnt, 1834.
17	W	Battle of Nevill's Cross, 1346.
18	Th	St. Luke, Evangelist.
19	F	Leigh Hunt born, 1784.
20	S	Thomas Hughes born, 1823.
21	S	22nd Sunday after Trinity.
22	M	Captain Mayne Reid died, 1888.
23	T	Battle of Edgehill, 1642.
24	W	David Roberts, R.A., born, 1796; died, 1864.
25	Th	Battle of Balaclava, 1854.
26	F	Count Von Moltke born, 1800.
27	S	Capitulation of Metz, 1870. [Jude.]
28	S	23rd Sunday after Trinity. SS. Simon and
29	M	Sir Walter Raleigh executed, 1618.
30	T	Richard Brinsley Sheridan born, 1751; died, 1816.
31	W	Hallowmass Eve.

## MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	First Quarter ..	7h. 1m. Afternoon.
14th.	Full Moon ..	6 41 Afternoon.
21st.	Last Quarter ..	6 56 Afternoon.
28th.	New Moon ..	5 57 Afternoon.

## DECEMBER.

1	S	Princess of Wales born, 1844.
2	S	Advent Sunday.
3	M	Battle of Ansterlitz.
4	T	Pretender entered Derby, 1745.
5	W	Dumas the Elder died, 1870.
6	Th	St. Nicholas.
7	F	Algernon Sidney beheaded, 1683.
8	S	Thomas de Quincey died, 1859.
9	S	2nd Sunday in Advent.
10	M	William Hogarth born, 1697; died, 1764.
11	T	John Gay, poet, died, 1732.
12	W	Robert Browning died, 1869.
13	Th	Council of Trent, 1545.
14	F	Prince Albert died, 1861.
15	S	George Romney born, 1734; died, 1802.
16	S	3rd Sunday in Advent.
17	M	Sir Humphry Davy born, 1778; died, 1829.
18	T	C. M. von Weber born, 1786; died, 1826.
19	W	J. M. W. Turner died, 1851.
20	Th	John Fletcher, dramatist, born, 1579.
21	F	St. Thomas.
22	S	Thomas Banks, sculptor, born, 1738; died, 1805.
23	S	4th Sunday in Advent.
24	M	Matthew Arnold born, 1822; died, 1888.
25	T	Christmas Day.
26	W	St. Stephen.
27	Th	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.
28	F	Innocents' Day.
29	S	W. E. Gladstone born, 1809.
30	S	1st Sunday after Christmas.
31	M	Battle of Wakefield, 1460.

## MOON'S PHASES.

5th.	First Quarter ..	0h. 15m. Afternoon.
12th.	Full Moon ..	7 46 Afternoon.
19th.	Last Quarter ..	11 16 Morning.
27th.	New Moon ..	2 30 Morning.

Golden Number.. .. 14  
 Epact .. .. 23

Solar Cycle .. .. 27  
 Dominical Letter .. .. G

Roman Indiction .. .. 7  
 Julian Period .. .. 6607

Gold Medals, Paris, 1878:1889.

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PART 58.

### CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Through the Ranks. A Serial		Zenobia: A Commonplace Girl.	
Story ... 337, 361, 385, 409		A Story in Nine Chapters ...	
Captain Cleveland. The True		355, 379, 404, 429	
Story of a real Pirate ... 342		About the Flemings. ... 376	
Three Days in Lakeland ... 346		A New Colony. In Two Parts 390, 424	
An Omnibus Story ... 351		In Poncha City ... 395	
The Old Road to Tunbridge		An Ascent of Bruncu Spina 403	
Wells ... 367		Between the Seasons ... 414	
Regret. A Poem ... 372		Old Jones. A Complete Story ... 417	
A Self-made Martyr. A Com-		The Poetic Drama at Daly's	
plete Story ... 372		Theatre ... 420	

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

NO. 249.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER VI. THE WISHING WELL.

YOU turned down a slippery little path-way, turned round a sharp corner, and there stood the little house facing you. No; not exactly facing you, for, as though seized with a fit of shyness, Norah O'Connor's humble home had turned its head aside, gazing with its two small window-eyes right into the woods, where the cushat sang overhead, and the tiny vole burrowed under the velvet-green moss. Here, in springtime, on the soft, billowy under-grass, primroses uprose like foam on the ripples of the sea. In a soft, open Christmas, snowdrops nodded their white heads among the brown bracken and shrivelled leaves, and were gathered by Norah, and taken to the little church about half a mile away nearer the city. The good old priest would smile as he saw the girl coming with the bunched-up white beauties—for flowers were scarce at Christmastide—and the altar must be dressed somehow. His old heart—compressed, but not withered by the life of isolation incident to his position—had a soft spot for Norah O'Connor.

There was a sad look in the girl's great grey eyes, that his experience as a student of humanity told him is often to be seen—even in early childhood—in those destined to much sorrow. Maybe it is the shadow of the long, dark days that are coming; the mark of a destiny that approaches with sure though stealthy steps. The good father knew that the traditional

purity and uprightness of the peasant woman of Ireland were not lacking in this fair flower of his flock; and the sad look in her eyes puzzled him.

"Shure, yer riverence, an' she's bin after havin' a look in her eyes same as if she were prayin' iver since she were a wee girl-baby lookin' up at me from the bress', an' spakin' as plain as plain, an' all the while she as dumb as dumb, as was only natural—praise be! I've a mind to think it's a spell as was cast on her by ould Divil Maloney as they called her—a rale witch—savin' yer riverence's presence—an' one as took a spiritooal hold on Danny Murphy's blue pig, an' the cratur distroyed hisself by houlding his blessed ould head in a pail o' water, nose downmost, an' Mrs. Murphy took a fit, seein' the baste so contrairy, and lost her senses entiorely, in place o' ketching hould o' the curly tail of him an' pullin' like mad. An' that same Divil Maloney was caught out speerin' into the cot where the blessed child Norah lay slapin' the slape o' the righteous—praise be to all the saints this day!—an' the child set off sobbin' an' catchin' of her blessed breath same as if some one was batin' her—and ever after, if her purty mouth smiled ever so, her eyes never caught the glint; and bad cess to Divil Maloney, says I, for she cast a spell on the darlint, same as she did on Danny Murphy's blue pig—savin' your riverence's presence in the namin' of such a low-born cratur this day."

But we are wandering from the little cottage on the skirts of the wood. A pretty sight showed itself to the eyes of Alison and her cousin as the two reached the end of the narrow and crooked path leading from the road. Between the cottage and the edge of the wood were



several high, slender poles, and on the head of each a cunning square dovecote, with little arched doorways for the pigeons to go in and out of, and below these stood Norah, her cotton apron held in one hand to keep the grain in, and her lips crooning a low, soft cry, that sounded like "Ah-roo! Ah-roo!" Familiar enough it seemed to the inhabitants of the cotes, for, as the girls watched, the air pulsed with wings, and clouds of pigeons came fluttering to the ground. The little squeakers, only 'prentice hands at flying yet, made haste to climb, with rose-pink feet, all along Norah's linsey gown, thrusting their soft beaks into her closed hand, climbing even to her shoulders, boldly ruffling the ripples of her hair, hustling and bustling each other, and all the time keeping up the low, plaintive cry that was their way of pleading for notice. The conduct of their elders was more circumspect and becoming, though they gobbled eagerly enough, and crowded one on another as she slowly opened her apron, and let them get at the grain. One grand old blue-rock, with the hint of a fan, kept aloof from all the rest, bowing and curvetting near her feet, and coo-rooing in courtier-like fashion, as who should say: "Do not mind that vulgar crowd, but turn your attention to my superior manners and refined personality. I am really a very fine pigeon, and worthy of your notice." He had his way, as the persistently assertive generally have, and a special handful of grain was thrown to him, which he defended by standing right in the middle of it, and turning round and round, sweeping his tail against the ground, and pecking for dear life.

The girl, her lissom figure thrown back, her head raised and turned coaxingly to the little eager squeakers on her shoulders—she herself the centre of the many fluttering, outstretched wings, made a fair picture, and one that for some inscrutable reason became fixed with strange persistency in Alison's memory; but she caught sight of her two visitors—there was a little cry, she lost her hold upon the apron, down fell the grain, and a new fluttering and shoving took place as the pigeons threw themselves upon it—all but two loving little squeakers, who still nestled on Norah's shoulder.

"You're welcome, ladies," said Norah, making a pretty reverence, and coming forward with glad yet quiet self-possession. "Phelim, ye ill-mannered cratur, get up on your legs, and bid the ladies welcome."

And now Phelim must be introduced to the reader; a dog of marvellous gifts, but most unprepossessing exterior—in a word, Phelim needed to be known in order to be appreciated. Phelim was not as other dogs. He was like a man who could not smile, for in early youth some misfortune had happened to his tail, and that speaking feature of a dog's personality was dumb. It stuck straight out—what there was of it—but Phelim could not wag it. Of his breed what can we say? The white hair of his coat was scanty, so that the pink skin showed through, and a black patch over one eye gave him a villainous look, as of one always—as Mrs. O'Connor put it—"just after comin' out of a foight." Also, he had a way of carrying one ear up and one ear down, that might have been knowing, but was not professional. It will be seen, then, that Phelim's beauty was not like to be his bane. He had, however, certain sterling qualities which will the further appear as our story proceeds.

Phelim had, like most of us, a pet aversion; he regarded the pushing and forward denizens of the kennels on the top of the long sticks with an undying hatred. For one thing, they took up a good deal of his dear mistress's time and attention; for another, they fluttered about him, and confused him, when he was picking one of his rare bones. These were offences not to be forgiven; and Phelim was wise in his generation. He ignored the creatures who tormented him, as much as possible. Well for those of us who can do likewise. To put a disagreeable fact quite aside is a gift; and this gift Norah O'Connor's dog possessed in perfection. Hence, while the obnoxious pigeons were fed, he was wont to sit down flat in the soft, short grass, with his face to the hedge and his back well presented, lift his sharp nose in the air, and commune with his own heart; neither would he budge one inch until he caught the sound of Norah's light footfall going back into the house. To flurry himself and bark at those pitiful objects was evidently quite beneath him. He considered that to be entirely ignored by a respectable dog was a far more biting sarcasm; and though Norah called him never so wisely, not an inch would he turn, not an eyelash would he wink, until the feeding process was over.

But Miss Alison Drew was quite a different matter, and Phelim was quickly at her feet—not wagging his tail for joy, since that was beyond him, but showing by

his glistening eye and loving caresses how glad he was to see her.

"It's Phelim that's glad to see you, Miss Alison, this day," said Norah. "He just worships the ground you walk on; and I'm after beginning to be jealous-minded, I can tell ye. Come in now, ladies, and see how the pillow-work is getting on wid itself."

The two girls followed her into the cottage, Phelim gravely leading the way.

The living-room was small and simple, but clean as a new-made pin; the red-brick floor glowing, the walls here and there ornamented with cheap prints of a religious character, and over the little open fireplace, where in winter the peat burnt hot and pungent, hung a coloured picture of the Holy Mother, that one known as the Mater Dolorosa. The lattice window, with its wreaths of climbing roses and its pots of musk inside, stood open, the light falling full upon a tiny round table, on which stood a sturdy cushion bearing a bit of cobweb-like tracery, and countless tiny pins, from which hung bobbins wound with delicate silky thread. The pigeons in their airy home, the bobbins on the pillow, these told the tale of the unusual comfort and plenty in Norah's unpretending home. What Mrs. O'Connor called "the rale ginty" used to come from far and wide to stock their dovecotes and to ornament their gowns. Besides, was not the altar in the great church in Patrick Street made lovely by a fall of lace, the creation of Norah's own hands?

These things bring profit, and it was whispered that Mary O'Connor's girl was laying by a pretty nest-egg against she should marry the dark-eyed young soldier, Harry Deacon. Of late these whispers had been sinister, for the disgrace that had fallen upon him became known, and it was the general impression that such a pretty colleen should look higher, and "do bhetter for herself entoi'rely." No one, however, dared say a word to Norah. Proud and reserved upon all that most nearly concerned herself, she went her own way in silence; and no sooner was Private Deacon once more at his place in the ranks, and able to get out of barracks, than she walked the whole stretch of the road by his side on market-day, all through Shandon Valley and on across Patrick's Bridga. True, they had some grave words together as they wandered by the edge of the wood, where the air was sweet with the cooing of the doves, and the scent of the musk was

blown across from the cottage window. True, the big tears dropped like pearls down Norah's cheek, but not even to her garrulous old mother did Norah say one word against her lover; and if he gave her his word and pledge to keep away from the canteen, and nevermore be brought in by the picket of a night, no word of that sacred promise did she breathe to man or woman. It was her secret and Harry's, and when she kissed him, and bade the saints be with him, as he left her that golden summer's evening, he knew the kiss and the blessing were seals to the compact made between them.

But Harry's evil star was in the ascendant. The pledge was broken, made once more, again violated. This was not from any jeering on the part of his comrades. A man who "cast up" at a comrade the fact of having been "on the triangles," would have been lynched, I verily believe, so strong was feeling on the subject. Silence when the punishment was past, was an unwritten law in the ranks, and woe be to the man who transgressed against it—a merciful, a just, a righteous law. There was nothing in his surroundings to drag Harry Deacon down, rather were hands stretched out to raise him up. Hugh Dennison was the Captain of his company, no lazy Captain either, or one to leave all the welfare of the company in the hands of the non-coms. When the Captain of number ten, light company, went round the men's dinners, it was not a case of the Sergeant yelling "Attention," and the officer shouting "Any complaints?" and rushing off before any could possibly be made. Everything pertaining to the men's comfort was carefully looked into; every man felt he had a friend in the "quiet Captain," as they used to call him, from his somewhat stately, gentle manner.

"He's a lamb in peace, and he'd be a lion in war," said a man in canteen one night, and the saying became company's property, and was looked upon as a smart thing. It was told that once, catching a seasoned gamester of a regiment that shall be nameless and numberless, cheating a callow youngster of "Ours" at cards—in fact, indulging in the delightful pastime of "plucking a pigeon"—Hugh Dennison had taken the said warrior gently but firmly by the back of his collar, lifted him bodily out of the club window, and dropped him with delicate precision in the exact centre of a clump of leafy shrubs below.

Manly, almost pleading words of counsel were spoken to Private Deacon by his Captain. The man who could act promptly, could speak to the point, and aptly. He could not bear to see a man go under for lack of warning. Perhaps he would have been highly indignant if any one had suggested that the fact of knowing how deep an interest Miss Drew took in pretty Norah, added a warmth to his own interest in Private Deacon, nevertheless such was the case. Love is like a light that reflects itself in a thousand mirrors; you never know how far its radiance will shine, or into what unlikely corners.

But we are leaving Norah and her two visitors too long over the lace-pillow, in the cottage by the wood.

"Shure an' I took that one from the frost on the pane, that white winter a while ago—an' it's a mighty purty pattern too; but it's hard to do, and work as you may, it's a bit the size of your finger-nail you'll do in a mornin', miss."

"Oh, it's just lovely!" said the Major's golden-haired daughter, full of superlatives as became her young years and enthusiastic nature; "and when it's finished, Norah, and laid on mother's black velvet gown, there won't be a trimming in county Cork to touch it."

Norah smiled at this, showing a rim of pearly teeth; but the look in her eyes never changed—nay, were they not full of a weary, hunted look, such as Alison had never seen there before?

Surely things must be going badly, somehow, with this simple Irish girl who had crept into a warm corner of her heart and nestled there?

Mrs. O'Connor had become bedridden from rheumatism, but enjoyed herself greatly in receiving visits of sympathy from various "gintry" round about, and in the detailing of her many symptoms, freely interspersed with appeals to her many saints, knew no weariness. Clean, spick-and-span was she kept by her daughter's ceaseless care, and held high court in the corner of a little room up a crooked stair-way, and then down two rather unexpected steps.

"Run upstairs, dear," said Alison to her cousin, "and say a word to Mrs. O'Connor while I settle about the lace."

"Say a word—hear a word, you mean," replied the other, laughing. "Why, last time I was up there she told me all about her courting days, and the little pink pig the neighbours clubbed together to give

her as a dowry, and all about Norah here, and how she got bewitched."

"Yes, yes," said Alison, laughing. "We know all about that, don't we, Norah?"

Then Elsie went, and the two women were left alone, looking into each other's faces.

That long look, questioning on the one hand, pitifully, wildly sad on the other, ended in Norah flinging her head upon her arms with a low sobbing cry:

"Oh—my Harry!—my Harry!"

Alison was beside her in a moment, her hand upon the bowed head.

"What is it? Tell me—tell me."

"Arrah, whist, Miss Alison, how can I tell? Shure an' his heart is broke within him, he's not the same boy at all at all, and his eyes look like those of a wild beast—a wild beast that's caught and caged. Ah, Miss Alison, shure and I'm born to sorrow. I've had but a sip of it yet, but the full cup's there ready, and I'll have to be after draining it to the drega."

Then, with an indescribable gesture of abandonment, the girl gazed at the divine picture of the Mother of Sorrows; then turning, flew to Alison's side.

"Ah, Miss Alison dear, it is meeself that's cruel to burden you wi' the griefs, the half of which I cannot spake of; but my heart's fair fit to burst some days, and there's something in your kind face draws the words from me mouth, and the tears from me eyes, and I feel like a child that clutches at the mother's gown, and looks up in her face for comfort. Shure, Miss Alison dear, you've suffered sore yourself, that knows how to draw out the sorrows of others so well? There, now, bad cess to me, I've driven the colour from your cheek, an' brought the trimble to your lips. Come along wid me, Miss Alison, to the Wishing Well; you're so good and true, so gentle and kind, whatever you wish the blessed saints will take note of, an' we'll wish together—you an' me—wish wi' all our hearts and souls, and then the thing may come to pass, who knows?"

A moment more and the two were making their way through the wood—thus taking a short cut, instead of going round by the road. The sound of the pigeons' cooing died away, the underwood grew dense, and they had to push the branches aside as they passed. Phelim was in a state of radiant satisfaction. Was it not possible that some lurking little beast—something that scuttled or crawled—might be the object of this sudden raid? No more bloodthirsty being than Phelim lived,

in his own way, and dreams of possible bliss were his, as he rustled and panted through the wood. Presently they came upon a round, open space, from which a pathway ran upwards to the main road.

In the centre of this space was a sight, strange indeed to Sassanach eyes, but familiar enough to those who have sojourned long in Southern Ireland. A small, deep, still pool of water, glistening under a bower of wild rose-bushes, and these bushes covered with tiny shreds and knots of faded ribbon, even of fragments of white cotton, or the ravellings of the rag of a frayed garment. Every knot meant a wish—and Heaven only knew the story of sorrow and longing that each could tell.

"Now wish, Miss Alison, wish with all your tender heart, and the blessed saints hear you this day, for the sake of poor sad Norah. Holy St. Joseph—he's the one will never turn the deaf ear to the wish that's wished with a full heart, an' tied with a true-love knot. Here, take the ribbon from my bosom, Miss Alison. Harry gave it me a long while back, an' it's faded and raved, but what of that? Wish, Miss Alison, darlint, wish for my Harry to be given back to me again, and kept from the evil that lies in wait."

As with trembling fingers Alison tied the poor faded bit of ribbon to a long drooping bough, Norah gave a cry.

"What ails thee, Phelim—is it a sperrit you're after seein', or a lepricawn frighting ye' now, ye thafe o' the world?"

Phelim's back was arched like an angry cat's, his sparse hairs stood erect, and his lips were drawn back in a diabolical grin, while he growled fierce and low.

Then came a rustle in the underwood that ran like a sea round the island of space. Alison recognised the scent of a cigar—a recumbent figure rose, and there in the shadow of the overhanging trees stood Captain Ellerton, baring his comely head, and wearing a pleasant smile as he greeted Miss Drew. He also tried his best to greet Phelim, but that perverse animal drew back on all-fours, stiffening himself out in a wildly defiant attitude, and growled with greater malice than before.

"Norah," said Alison.

But when she turned, Norah was gone, and happily Phelim followed his mistress promptly, having delivered himself of one parting yelp of unspeakable disgust.

"That brute makes me long to have a gun handy," said Captain Ellerton, dusting the bits of dried grass from his clothes.

"Oh," said Alison, "it's only Phelim, you know; he lets little things vex him—he doesn't mean any harm."

"It seems to me, Miss Drew, you are making a close study of the native raw material," returned Ellerton, with the faint suggestion of a sneer.

Alison flushed up.

"I hope you don't mean Norah, Captain Ellerton. Norah is my—friend."

He bowed in silence, but the bow was worse than any words.

"It is strange we should meet out here," said Alison presently, as the two paced slowly on side by side.

Captain Ellerton stopped suddenly, obliging Alison to do so too.

"Miss Drew, I must ask you to keep silence as to our meeting. It is important just now—nor am I able to say more. You may have heard a hint dropped by Major Henneker, though I know he is very reserved on all regimental matters. I can only beg of you to be led by my wishes. My very identity must be kept secret from these—friends of yours."

A deep distrust of this man at all times filled Alison's mind, and she knew he was no favourite with the Major and Mrs. Henneker; still, truth and earnestness seemed to speak in his face and voice.

She gave her word; also going surety for her cousin, a more difficult undertaking, for she was a determined chatterbox at all times.

"You will allow me the pleasure of walking home with you?" said Ellerton, and truly Alison could not well say him nay.

Presently Elsie came running up the crooked path from the cottage.

"Norah said you were coming round this way. Oh, Phelim, what a naughty dog!"

For Phelim stood in the gap that led to his home, and made himself look like a ghost-hound in a German ballad.

Happily Elsie made no comment upon Captain Ellerton's presence; she was too well-bred to be afflicted with small curiosities; and besides, her thoughts were full of the marvellous adventures related to her by Mrs. O'Connor.

They talked of Irish superstitions, and Irish fairy-tales, and the time passed merrily enough, until—just when they came under the shadow of the church of sweet bells—Tim darted out into the sunshine like a weasel from behind a stone.

The sight of Captain Ellerton seemed to fill him with most unholy glee. He struck an attitude, and performed a sort of rogue's

march, his skinny arms well out from his sides, his head erect, his mouth cutting his face in two.

"How is Patsey to-day?" said Alison hurriedly, noting the scowl on Ellerton's face. "Tell him I'm coming to see him in a day or two, and have something nice to bring him."

"Patsey's got a kind of a wakeness on him, your honour's ladyship, an' a trimblement in his blessed insoide, so I hear, but this'll be the day he'll smolle an' be glad whin I tell him you're thinking of him, the darlint."

Then Tim resumed his interrupted march; and to make matters worse—though the two girls had not the faintest idea how much worse—took to addressing an imaginary army.

"The shadders will be flittin' on the hills whin the moon tops the barn, an' ye'll be all there, me boys. Right—about—face! Quick march."

Then the little wiry voice uprose in a song:

A thousand pikes are flashing  
At the rising of the moon, . . .  
The rising of the moon. . . .

"Is this another of your friends, Miss Drew?" said Ellerton quietly.

Elsie answered for her cousin.

"That is Tim. I'm afraid he is a naughty boy, Captain Ellerton, but we are very fond of him."

"I think I, too, should like to cultivate—Tim. Here, boy, here's a fairing for you."

Slowly on his tip-toes came Tim. His eyes swelled in his head as he saw the new bright shilling in the "gentleman's" hand, and he gave a whoop as he took it in his little dirty fingers, spinning it up into the air to a marvellous height and catching it again, pulled out a long tail or tag of some mysterious garment, tied the coin securely into it, and then set to marching again, this time on his hands, with his spindle-legs in the air.

### CAPTAIN CLEVELAND.

#### THE TRUE STORY OF A REAL PIRATE.

IN the advertisement to the first edition of "The Pirate," Sir Walter Scott gave a summary of the "imperfect traditions and mutilated records" of the Orkneys, concerning a certain John Gow, or Goffe, or Smith—out of which traditions he elaborated the romance of Captain Cleveland. His own "veracious narrative," however, Scott declared to have been compiled from materials to which he alone had had access,

and these materials are assumed to have been procured from Bessie Millie, of Stromness, the prototype of Norna of the Fitful Head.

But notwithstanding all this, it is quite possible that Scott had also the aid of Daniel Defoe's account of the Pirate Gow, although only one copy of the original work, published in 1725, is now known to exist—that, namely, in the British Museum. Whether this be so or not, Defoe's work is well worth a little attention. The author of "Robinson Crusoe" had always a fancy for tales of crime, and he was especially familiar with stories of pirates. He wrote numerous accounts and confessions of notorious criminals for "The Original Journal" of John Applebee, and it was during his connection with that journal that he became acquainted with the affairs of Gow. The pamphlet in which he gave the narrative to the world was entitled: "An Account of the Conduct and Proceedings of the late John Gow, alias Smith, Captain of the late Pirates, Executed for Murder and Piracy committed on Board the George Galley, afterwards called the Revenge, with a Relation of all the horrid Murders they committed in Cold Blood. As also of their being taken at the Islands of Orkney and sent up Prisoners to London."

Sir Walter Scott, in his notes to "The Pirate," gives the name of Gow's ship as the "Revenge," although in the novel it is the "Rover" which appears at Kirkwall, with one Goffe in command, Cleveland having lost his own ship off Sumburgh Head.

The disputes in the novel between Goffe and his mates are recalled by Defoe's sage comments on the piratical fraternity generally:

"Tho' they generally put in this or that Man to act as Commander for this or that Voyage or Enterprise, they frequently remove them again upon the smallest Occasion, nay, even without any Occasion at all, but as Humours and Passions govern at those Times."

And in proof that this is done he goes on to say that he once knew a buccaneering vessel with a crew of seventy men, who had so often set up and pulled down captains and officers that over seven-and-forty of them had been in office at some time or other, while no fewer than thirteen had had a turn as captain. In Gow's case, however, he was really the captain, although not in absolute command, being sometimes in peril of deposition by his own officers.

This Gow is described by Defoe as "a superlative, a Capital Rogue," who had

long thought of turning pirate before the opportunity presented itself. After failure in one attempt to demoralise a crew, he shipped as able seaman on board the English ship, "George Galley," of two hundred tons burden, then loading—1724—at Amsterdam for Santa Cruz on the Barbary coast.

The ship was commanded by a Guernsey man called Oliver Ferneau, who was entrusted with a commission by Dutch merchants to collect a cargo of beeswax on the Barbary coast, and convey it to Genoa for sale. The reason why an English ship was employed was because the Dutch were then at war with "the Turks of Algiers," and Ferneau seems to have been a man of credit and repute among the good burghers of Amsterdam. The voyage was a confidential and a risky one, and to remove all trace of the Dutch connection, Ferneau engaged an English crew, including Gow. It would seem, however, that in order to make up his complement of twenty-three hands, the Captain had to ship a few Swedes, two of whom, named Winter and Petersen, turned out as big rascals as Gow himself.

The "George Galley" reached Santa Cruz in September, and the collecting and shipping of the beeswax detained her till the third of November, 1724, when the captain prepared to sail for Genoa. But Gow had been laying his plans, and fostering the discontent of the men about some question of provisions. He had, by his skilful seamanship, been promoted to be second mate, and he allowed Winter and Petersen to take the initiative in mutiny.

The very first night at sea these three worthies persuaded some five more of the crew to combine with them, seize the captain and mate, throw them overboard, take possession of the ship, and "go upon the account;" which is to say, turn pirates. With great circumstantiality Defoe gives all the details of the conspiracy, which we need not follow. It resulted in the captain, mate, and two others being brutally murdered, and in Gow, as second mate, assuming command of the ship, with one Williams as lieutenant. The rest of the crew were afterwards cowed or persuaded into joining in the enterprise.

First, they changed the name of the ship to the "Revenge," and agreed to an equal division of all plunder. Then they overhauled all the guns on deck, and brought up six more which had been held in reserve in the hold in case of trouble with the Algerines. This gave an armament

of eighteen guns fully mounted, and a great deal more than they could efficiently work. Then they put the ship about to cruise off the coasts of Spain and Portugal, in the hope of picking up a ship laden with wine, which they wanted badly.

Their first prize was an English sloop with salt-fish from Newfoundland. This was of no use to them, so they took out the captain and crew, all the anchors, chains, and sails, and whatever else was worth removing, and scuttled her. The next prize was a Scotch vessel bound from Glasgow to Genoa with herrings, and therefore of little use to them, so they sank her also, after removing the crew and all they thought worth plundering.

For a fortnight they had no success at all, and then they began to get short of water, as well as wine. So they ran for Madeira, and after cruising about for a few days in hope of capturing a wine-ship, put boldly into the Portuguese port of Porto Santo. There they ran up the English flag, and made such a brave show that the Governor and some of the principal people came off to visit the captain. Gow received them in state, but would not allow them to go ashore again until he obtained all the provisions and water he demanded. With such hostages, of course, the pirates easily got all they wanted, and they soon set sail again, after landing the terrified officials, with a consolatory present of beeswax out of the cargo of the Dutch merchants.

Running back to the Spanish coast, they next captured an American vessel bound for Lisbon with staves. She was of no more use to them than the previous captures, but offered an opportunity of getting rid of some of their prisoners. They took out the American crew and replaced them with the crew of the Newfoundlander, to whom they made liberal presents of the beeswax, for which the pirates had no market.

Shortly afterwards they captured a French vessel laden with fruit and wine, which was what they wanted. So they stood out to sea with their prize until they got to a safe distance, transhipped as much of the wine and fruit as they could stow, took out all the ammunition and the best of the sails, etc., removed the French crew, and made a present of what remained to the Glasgow captain whose ship they had sunk, and the American captain whose ship they had given to the Newfoundlanders. It cannot be denied that there is some element of humour in these rough acts of what they called justice.

Their next encounter was not so fortunate—for them. This was with a large French merchant-ship, with thirty-two guns and a crew of eighty, besides many passengers. Gow declared that she was too strong for them to attack, and most of the men agreed with him, but Williams, the lieutenant, who was a blood-thirsty kind of creature, full of reckless courage, insisted upon fighting the Frenchman. A quarrel ensued in which Williams tried to shoot Gow, and a characteristic scene followed, as thus related by Defoe:

"Winter and Petersen standing nearest to Williams and seeing him so furious, flew at him immediately, and each of them fir'd a pistol at him, one shot him thro' the Arm and the other into his Belly, at which he fell, and the men about him laid hold of him to throw him overboard, believing he was dead; but as they lifted him up he started violently out of their hands and leaped directly into the Hold, and from thence run desperately into the Powder Room, with his Pistol cock'd in his Hand, swearing he would blow them all up; and had certainly done it, if they had not seized him just as he had gotten the Scuttle open, and was that moment going in to put his hellish Resolution in practice."

Williams was then clapped into irons. The big Frenchman was avoided, but presently a fish-laden Bristol ship was captured, and into her, after the usual removals, they put the crew of the French wine-ship and let them go. They also sent Williams as a prisoner, with directions to the French skipper to deliver him to the first English man-of-war they should meet with, "in order to his being hang'd for a Pirate." These curious transfers were what Defoe calls "a strange Medley of Mock Justice made up of Rapine and Generosity blended together."

This Williams was really an inhuman monster, and the worst of the gang, who, indeed, seem to have been shocked and sobered by some of his bloody proposals. They were glad to get quit of him, but they were to meet him again in a fashion they little anticipated, for the captain of the Bristol ship duly delivered him to the captain of an English warship at Lisbon, who brought him home to England just about the same time as Gow and his confederates were being brought to justice themselves.

After parting from the Bristol ship, Gow quickly realised that the report she carried would make these waters too hot for them. He knew there was a man-of-war in the

Tagus, which would soon be after them. So after many consultations and wild proposals, Gow's plan was adopted of running for the North of Scotland, where he was born and bred, and where he assured the men of lots of plunder on shore if they could not meet with any prizes on the sea. This plan was the more readily adopted that the crew were again getting short of provisions and water.

There was some ingenuity in Gow's plan of ravaging the Orkneys, for he knew not only where the best houses were near the shore and absolutely unguarded, but also that much time must elapse before news of their doings could reach the Government and bring a warship to Ultima Thule. But, as usual with men who play desperate games, he had omitted to count all the chances.

About the middle of January, 1725, the "Revenge" cast anchor in Carristown Harbour, Orkney, under the lee of a small island, and Gow coached his men in the story they were to tell the Orcadians, and the kind of language they were to use in converse with the people. Had they observed all Gow's directions, says Defoe, there is no doubt they could have done all the mischief they intended, and escaped with ease before the country became alarmed.

A couple of ships put into the harbour before they had matured their plans, and as the pirates wanted to stay awhile in port, they did not plunder, but bartered for wine, and brandy, and ropes, and other goods, with the Dutchmen's beeswax. It is not quite clear how they accounted for the possession of this cargo, for the story they had devised for the Orcadians was that they were bound from Cadiz to Stockholm and Danzig, but had missed the Sound by reason of ice and strong winds, and had been driven so far to the northward that they needed an overhaul as well as to procure water and provisions. The story was a plausible one—except that cargoes of beeswax are not usually brought from Cadiz. This little inconsistency, however, does not seem to have struck the Orcadians, who were quite willing to trade with the strangers.

One thing that Gow omitted to take into account was that some of his crew were practically pressed-men, who had concurred in the piratical enterprise merely to save their own necks. Ten of these one day slipped quietly into the long-boat and made for the mainland, where they eventually arrived, only to be arrested and sent prisoners to Edinburgh. Another

man who was sent ashore for some purpose slipped away to a farmhouse, hired a horse and rode to Kirkwall, where he surrendered himself to the authorities, and disclosed the whole design of Gow. The word was passed through the islands, and the gentlemen whose houses were included in Gow's scheme of plunder, were warned to put their places in a state of defence. The curious thing is that Gow did not take alarm at these desertions and put to sea at once. Instead of doing that, he determined on a bold stroke.

He organised a night attack on the house of the Sheriff of the county, Mr. Honeyman of Grahamsay, who happened to be from home at the time. Mrs. Honeyman and her daughter, with considerable dexterity, managed to escape with all the money and the Sheriff's papers, but the pirates plundered all the plate and whatever else they could carry off, and finding that one of the servants played the bagpipes, they forced him to march along in front and pipe them back to the boats.

They judged it prudent to weigh anchor the morning after this exploit, and they cruised among the islands for a few days, picking up what they could. Then they ran for the Island of Eda, where lived a Mr. Fea, a gentleman of considerable estate, with whom Gow had been at school, and whose house he had made up his mind to rob. He counted upon Fea having been drawn to Carristown by the report of the deserter, but Fea had been detained at home by the illness of his wife and proved more than a match for Gow. Fea sent off a message to Gow, requesting him not to fire any guns to alarm his sick wife, and saying that if his old schoolfellow had not turned pirate, as had been reported, he would be glad to supply him with such necessities as his island afforded.

In running in, however, Gow's seaman-ship was for once at fault, and getting his ship into a strong tidal current he very nearly had her ashore. He only saved her from wreck by dropping anchor in the Sound, but in such a position that he could neither sail out again nor heave off, the ship having no boat left big enough for the purpose. Gow's answer to Fea's letter, then, was a demand for the use of a big boat with an anchor, to enable him to get the "Revenge" out of her perilous position. Fea had such a boat, but on getting the message he quietly scuttled her, and hid all her gear.

Gow's next move was to send a boat's

crew ashore armed to the teeth, who made straight for the Mansion House. Fea met them in a conciliatory manner, and mildly requested them not to go to the House on account of the illness of Mrs. Fea, but invited them to a neighbouring tavern to discuss matters. The pirates went willingly enough, but at the same time gave Fea to understand that if he did not supply the boat required by Gow, he had nothing to expect from them but "the utmost extremity."

Mr. Fea behaved with great coolness and cunning. He went alone with the pirates to the tavern, but on the way managed to give orders to some of his people to step down to the beach, and remove the oars, the mast, and sail, from the pirates' boat, and then after a while to call him out of the room suddenly. This was done, and the pirates, befuddled with liquor, were all captured and sent away under guard. Messengers were sent out to alarm the country, and bonfires were lighted at night on the hills, which seeing, Gow endeavoured to set sail and make off. But a gale had set in, and before he could get way on the ship she was driven ashore. Here the crew were effectually prisoners, for the only boat they had had been captured by Fea.

Gow was not beaten, however, and it would be very difficult to take him where he was. This he knew, and began to negotiate with Fea, offering a thousand pounds in goods for the use of men and boats to get his ship afloat again. Fea temporised, and on various pretexts about the boat, got the crew ashore by twos and threes, and made prisoners of them all, including Gow. The various stratagems employed by Fea were exceedingly ingenious, but he also displayed great personal courage, for the pirates were heavily armed, and in the position of desperate men in peril of their lives.

"It was indeed," says Defoe, "a most agreeable sight to see such a Crew of desperate Fellows so tamely surrender to a few almost naked Countrymen, and to see them circumvented by one Gentleman, and were rendered quite Useless to themselves and to their own Destruction; the want of a Boat was as much to them as an actual Imprisonment, nay, they were indeed in Prison in their ship, nor was they able to stir one way or other, Hand or Foot; it was too Cold to swim over to the Island and seize the Boat, and if they had, unless they had done it immediately at first, the



People on Shore would have been too strong for them, so that they were as secure on board the Ship, as to any Escape they could have made, as they were afterwards in the Condemn'd Hold in Newgate."

At the same time one cannot but marvel how men of such evident boldness could have so simply "given themselves away" as they did in their whole proceedings at Eda. "Nothing but men infatuated to their own Destruction," as good Daniel says, "and condemn'd by the visible Hand of Heaven to an immediate surprise," could have been so stupid as they showed themselves.

Thus ended their desperate undertaking, however, and all through the gallant and crafty Mr. Fea with some five or six followers.

Being now safely in custody, all that remained was to get the pirates conveyed to the place of trial. The distance being so great, there was considerable delay. At last orders came to send the prisoners by land to Edinburgh, and thence by the frigate "Greyhound" to the Thames. Before they met their doom nearly half a year elapsed.

The "Greyhound" arrived at Woolwich with the prisoners on the twenty-sixth of March, 1725, and a few days later they were conveyed under strong guard to the Marshalsea Prison. And in the Marshalsea Gow and his gang found "Lieutenant" Williams, who had just preceded them by a few days, having been brought from Lisbon in the frigate "Argyle."

The trial took up some time, as evidence had to be taken of the relative degrees of guilt of the prisoners, five of whom turned King's evidence. Gow maintained a sullen demeanour, and although he showed no sign of repentance, he also showed no sign of fear. He refused to plead, and was therefore condemned to torture after the law of the period, but the sight of the apparatus terrified him into confession, or rather into pleading. He was then tried in due form and found guilty.

The evidence against Williams was that of the whole crew, so that these two, with Winter, Petersen, and four others, were all hanged together on the eleventh of June, 1725. Defoe notes that "Gow, as if Providence had directed that he should be twice hanged, his crimes being of a twofold Nature and both Capital, soon he was turned off, fell down from the Gibbet, the Rope breaking by the weight of some that pulled his leg to put him out of pain; he was still alive and sensible,

tho' he had hung Four Minutes, and able to go up the Ladder the second time, which he did with very little Concern and was hang'd again; and since that a Third Time, viz. in Chains over-against Greenwich, as Williams is over-against Blackwall."

Thus shockingly ended the career of this desperado, over whom the genius of Scott has thrown a halo of romance. There was a real romance in his life and death if we are to believe Orcadian tradition, which says that while in the Orkneys Gow engaged the affections of a young lady named Gordon, who plighted troth with him at the Stone of Odin, one of the Stones of Stennis. She followed Gow up to London after his arrest, but too late to see him before his execution. She requested a sight of his dead body, and touching his hand formally resumed the troth-plight, in obedience to the Scotch superstition of the time, which would otherwise have doomed her to the visitations of the ghost of her dead lover.

Mr. Fea does not seem to have profited by his gallantry in capturing the pirates. Sir Walter Scott says he did not receive any reward from Government, but another account says he received one thousand one hundred pounds from the State, three hundred pounds for salvage, and four hundred pounds as a testimonial of gratitude from London merchants. All this and more, however, was lost in a series of law-suits brought against him by Newgate solicitors in the name of Gow and others of the pirate crew, so that he was ultimately ruined. In desperation he joined the rebellion of '45, and by way of reward had his house burned down by the Hanoverians.

### THREE DAYS IN LAKELAND.

It is wonderful how much of a picturesque district one may see in three days if there are mountain-tops or high church steeples sown over the district. I had three days to spare in the course of my journey from the Land o' Cakes to John Bull's metropolis, and so I left the express at Carlisle, packed off my luggage to Preston, and, with just a cartridge-case full of night-gear, prepared for a refresher in Lakeland.

The day was divine when I started from Keswick—though perhaps a little late to begin a walk to Buttermere. In fact, it was five o'clock. But to my mind it was the very hour for the enterprise. The evening clear-

ness was coming upon the mountains, and great Skiddaw raised his bulk heavenwards close at hand with most alluring lucidity.

I hurried through Keawick, and rested only at Crosthwaite's charming little church, where Southey lies. Some people think Southey's life and end very melancholy. I can scarcely fancy they were that. He must have feasted on happiness every day of his life on which he set foot outside his studious retreat. I take leave further to believe that there is a certain felicity in madness, and its milder stages down to mere imbecility, which only the mad and imbecile can know. Be that as it may, Crosthwaite is a sweet spot to moulder in. Quite lately I had visited the Royal burial-places of the Kings of Sweden and the Kings of Denmark. The contrast was tremendously on the side of the poet. If disembodied spirits come back to earth, the immortal parts of the Lakeland poets must have some agreeable hours—supposing they have not lost their appreciation of Nature's moods.

From Crosthwaite I turned by the head of the lake, with my face towards England's grandest group of mountains, and prepared for some dust. I was not, however, prepared for so much dust as I swallowed perforce.

To begin with, there was a brisk breeze from the mountains, which rustled the tree-tops and shook the bracken in the pretty woods south of Portinscale; and, to end with, the road was fearfully populous with excursionists' brakes returning from Buttermere. These brakes were all of the same description in their cargo. Some two-score young and middle-aged women were in each, attended by one minister, at most two ministers. And they sang hymns with fervour. I wonder the horses stood it. Doubtless, however, the poor brutes were more concerned about the gradients of this exacting road.

Ten times in succession, I should think, did that classic canticle, "Hold the Fort," strike upon my ear. I could hardly see the songsters in certain parts of the road: they rattled upon me in such a whirlwind of dust.

At the "Newlands Inn" four brakeloads of these votaries were in waiting. They chanted even while they stood still—yet not all, for mild non-intoxicating drinks were passing freely among them; and their ministerial guardians mopped their faces.

At last I got out of their neighbourhood, and I make no shame in saying I thanked Heaven for it. I was alone

with these noble mountains in their many colours, with the fast paling sky overhead, the tinkle of waterfalls in my ears, and the sweet smell of distant hay completing my sensual pleasure. It is odd how civilised man gets inebriated at times by Dame Nature's surpassing beauty. For my part, I could have sung as heartily as my friends on the highway. This glorious environment of grey and red rock, green bracken and strong mountain outlines under a cloudless sky, was too much for my ordinary composure.

But the hour grew late. The sun sank quite below the horizon, and the dun pallor of early night set. And still I was among the mountains. I had taken matters too easily. It behoved me to waste no time in rhapsodies about the charm of the vista up Whiteless Pike's ravine to the right, but to hurry down Buttermere Hause as fast as possible. The dear old valley was below, with the sombre lake glistening strangely beneath its mighty sentinels of Red Pike, High Stile, and High Crag. Ten years had sped since I was last here. I had forgotten all about the Fair Maid of Buttermere and all the rest of it in the meanwhile. Now it all came back to me in a flood of memory.

The village has not appreciably grown since 1883. It still numbers fewer than a hundred inhabitants, all told; and its tiny church has not been ousted by a modern building designed for ten times the present population. I found out these things after I had supped in Rigg's Hotel. My cigar did fairly well in fight with the midges. The air was warm, yet inevitably moist. It would have to be the very fiend of a drought to rob Buttermere vale of its natural humidity. There was no moon, and but few stars. Yet such stars as there were sufficed to bring out the majesty of the Buttermere mountains, brooding so formidably in the gloom over the now black waters of the lake. It was all very calm and soothing, but a thought melancholy, and so I returned to the hotel and gossiped with my landlord for the concluding hour of the day. Mr. Rigg is a man worth talking to. He has the history and legends of Buttermere at his fingers' ends. He, like his fathers before him, is Buttermere born and bred. But he is man of the world enough to think but lightly of the romance that has gathered about the name of the Buttermere beauty. Her tale was a very ordinary one, and her face was—according to Mr.

Rigg's forbears, who knew her well—nothing so much out of the common.

But gossip soon gave way to sleep, and the next day I was called early—to look out upon a world of grey mist and to hear the trickle of water-drops in the gutter-spout outside my bedroom.

This would have seemed to me most calamitous ten years ago. I should then at once have rushed to the conclusion that the day was destined to be bad all through. Now I knew better. I had increased in my knowledge of Nature as well as of men. And so I dressed and breakfasted and began my matutinal weed, content to bide my time. It was about an even chance whether the clouds would lift or stay.

And towards noon, sure enough, they lifted. They did not go up with a leap; but the lazy eddy skywards was enough for me. Besides, I was prepared for at least one drenching in my three days' jaunt. Why should it not come on that stony pass of Scarf Gap, which ten years ago I had thought so fine, though then I had crossed it in a fog which hid it utterly?

A hasty luncheon and I was off.

The gnats were loose when I turned towards Hassness, the pretty residence on the east shore of the lake. The perfume of firs and wet heather and many flowers was in the air. Though close and calm, there was a bracing feel in the dampness. I was, however, prepared to lose a certain number of pounds in my trudge over Scarf Gap and Black Sall. It was just the day for that sort of thing.

And lose them I did. The gradient of the walk is pretty tough all through, and the going is the roughest of the rough in places. If I had an old and very dear pair of boots to which I wished to give the "coup de grâce" in the most honourable manner without leaving England, I would take train with them to Wordsworth's country and go from Buttermere to Wasdale in them. They should then have dignified burial, for no tramp would be likely to look upon them with the eye of favour after the excursion.

I was delighted with the solitude I had for company. Between the hotel and Scarf Gap I saw but two human beings—a little girl who, with her thumb touchingly in her mouth, opened a certain gate for me and looked for a copper, and a little lad, her brother, who at the imagined sound of wheels from the Honister direction, scampered madly back to the gate with the frenzied cry, "They're a-coming." The

boy referred to a new edition of excursionists in brakes. This spurred me on. Should I or should I not be able to cross the head of the lake ere they came in sight? It was, however, a false alarm. I was grateful. I wanted no more of their dust and hymns for the present.

It was distinctly tiresome to have the mist down again thicker than ever ere I was half up Scarf Gap. But it was not a very wetting mist, and it could not hide from view the bold nearer rocks and the masses of parsley fern growing between the rocks.

I remember ten years ago with what avidity we had yearned to see the Pillar Mountain, with its deadly little protrusive spike, and how the mist had cheated us. It was much the same now, only I did not now take so much interest in the Pillar Rock. During the last ten years I have seen a good many natural wonders more thrilling than this little homicidal stump.

Only a brace of tourists between Buttermere and Wasdale, and in the holiday season, too! It seemed to me remarkable. But I was glad of it, of course. They were very happy-looking, inoffensive persons, seated in the midst of a fine drizzle of rain by the bridge over the Liza, on the dividing line between Black Sall and Scarf Gap, eating sandwiches and trifling with a flask. I should have paid them no manner of distinct civility had I met them in Keswick, the Strand, or even in Buttermere village. Here it was different. We exchanged remarks for about a minute and a half, and then I left them. The younger of them said: "We shall soon catch you up," whereupon I assured myself that it should be odd if they did. They did not.

In my opinion there is nothing finer in England, Scotland, Ireland, or Wales than the view from the head of Black Sall towards Wasdale. If you can see next to nothing, except about two-thirds of the bulk of the adjacent mountains, so much the better—at least, if you have a fairly strong imagination. Glencoe is, of course, grand, and so is Slieve League in Donegal, and the view down the Capel Curig side of Snowdon from the neck of Crib Goch. I dare say, really, all three are mightier than this Black Sall outlook. But when I was on Black Sall I thought otherwise.

Half an hour later I was in the Wasdale Hotel, that used to be "Auld Will Ritson's," and quite ready for a second luncheon. I was tolerably damp, but far from soaked. The weather looked brighter here,

strange to say. It was not too menacing to hinder a large party of carriage people from picnicking frigidly on the stony shores of the Mosedale Beck, just outside the hotel. For all that, the lake in the distance had an angry air, and the clouds were still low on Lingmell, which is the stepping-stone to Sea Fell from little Wasdale.

Wasdale village, like Buttermere, has grown but little during the past decade. The hotel has tacked on a wing, and I believe a new school-house has been built. Otherwise it is as it was. It is a mystery why they have not run a railway into the glen from Drigg or one of the other coast towns. But it is a mystery I for one don't want to see explained away in an emphatic realisation of the idea. It is still the romantic, depressing little nook it always has been since Nature in England ended her last great shuffle of materials. I talked on the subject with the wife of the Vicar. "Bored" does not express her state of mind, poor aspiring lady! She showed me the church and sold me a photograph of it, while she told with a certain fixed melancholy about the joys of life in Wasdale in winter. The living is worth but sixty pounds a year, which is at least as bad for a lady as a lack of congenial society.

After my second luncheon the weather looked altogether kinder. The clouds had gone above Lingmell, nor was red-sided Kirk Fell at all obscured. I had still plenty of energy in me, and so I set out to tackle the Screes, which fall so sharply into Westwater on the southern shore. But on close acquaintance the Screes—like so many of our brother bipeds—prove not nearly so formidable as they look. They are rugged enough in all conscience, and bad for boots; but they do not induce vertigo, nor is it at all easy to fall plump from their sides into the lake. I found a quantity of bilberries among the rocks, the stag's-horn moss, and parsley fern, and enjoyed them. I also enjoyed a very enticing view into Eskdale behind. Burnmoor Tarn, which few methodical tourists get a sight of, was quite near. It is one of the loneliest of the Lakeland tarns—and one of the least beautiful.

On my descent late in the afternoon I looked into Wasdale's little school-house. The building seats nineteen children. But their forms knew them not at that hour. Save for their desks and seats, a small easel, a map of England and a map of the World, a desk for the pedagogue, and some school-

books, the little place was empty. In the winter time there must be days when the attendance here is very meagre.

I do not care very much for the Wasdale Hotel. But I found diversion after dinner in the visitors' books, of which there is quite a library, and in which I read the impressions of tourists who had their sensibilities stirred here before I was born.

The Wasdale natives do not treat these travellers' outpourings with much respect. They seem to amuse themselves in the winter with scribbling uncomplimentary interjections and comments over and under them. They appear especially "down upon" the University men who come here for the vacations, and gush over their various mountain exploits. But they do not confine their malign attentions to the undergraduates.

Really, however, some of these tourists' notes are a trifle "de trop." In 1859, for example, a certain gentleman with the Christian name of Peter writes as follows: "Just returned from Australia, having sailed thirteen times round the world and crossed the equator thirty times; have lived five years in Geelong, Victoria, and feel all the better for it." How is this for an "à propos de bottles"? One may excuse the commentator who remarks, "Better go back"; or even the more acrid person who has scrawled across the writing the words: "No one feels interested the least although he has been so far from his mother."

For my part, I like better the tone of the good lady's observation which memorialises August the twenty-eighth, 1858: "The quietude and serenity of this beautiful Wasdale makes one's inward soul glad in the extreme." It is not irreproachable grammar nor irreproachable sense; but the sentence compels sympathy.

To resume my narrative, however. I gave word that I would rise soon after the lark the next morning if the sky was blue. The sky was very blue, but they did not call me before seven o'clock, which is surely late for the lark.

Everything looked in train for a brilliant day. I rejoiced that I had the very irreducible minimum of impedimenta. Under such a sky every ounce tells, especially when a mountain is in the day's programme.

I realised this almost as soon as I started. I crossed the dale, scaled one of those diabolical Cumberland walls—with their traps of alder twigs at the

summit—and with difficulty descended on the other side. After this the Mosedale Beck was easy, and so I found myself among the bracken of Lingmell. The ascent here is awfully steep, but otherwise straightforward enough for a man with absolutely no sense of locality.

The first half-hour was by far the hardest of the day, which I made fairly long ere I brought myself to an anchor. But it was excellent discipline. Afterwards I was in tip-top condition, and when I halted for the night at Skelwith I could easily have walked on to Windermere.

This is the conventional ascent of Sca Fell and Sca Fell Pike. You cannot well break a bone over it, unless on the Pike's cumbered summit you get your leg in a hole and snap it like gingerbread. I scarcely think it can be improved upon. It gives a broad view of Wastwater—to-day bare and peaceful—and leads you to the base of Sca Fell and the Pike at the same time, so as to impress you very keenly with an idea of the boldness of these heights. If, as I did, you climb up Brown Tongue when the crags of Sca Fell are in shadow, you cannot fail of a thrill in looking at them. They are so very black and so very steep. Of course, though, they are not unscalable. You may see that from the Wasdale Hotel visitors' book, if not with the naked eye. All the same, they are not to be tackled by the tourist fresh from town, and without previous experience as a cragsman.

I was in no hurry. Brown Tongue's slope was so attractive that twice I lay full length on it and smoked a cigarette while I stared at the speckless blue sky. The solitude was supreme, and I had whisky in my flask. Like Rousseau and other great men, I find I think my best thoughts among the mountains. I thought a surprising number of them on this occasion. Unfortunately, I made a note of not one of them.

There is no mistaking the summit of Sca Fell Pike, which I chose for my goal rather than the lower Sca Fell. It is a huge mound of slabs of the green slate, the debris of which bestrewn the mountain-top in an amazing manner. Many a hobnailed boot had scratched the rocks in the efforts of their owners to attain the desirable elevation on its apex. Of this green slate as good razor edges might be made as those furnished by the obsidian of the Peak of Tenerife.

You may guess what a royal day it was

when I say that it was warm even on Sca Fell Pike's cairn. I forgot to button up my coat, and feasted my eyes on the mountain-tops here, there, and everywhere. You may go far about the world to discover a more bewitching association of greys, purples, and bright crimson than Great Gable shows from Sca Fell Pike on a day like this. Great Gable is the object best worth seeing from England's monarch hill. It has a very notable precipice on this side, which looks as if it were dyed with the blood of innumerable victims to the lust of "vaulting ambition."

From Sca Fell Pike, at length, I struck down for Langdale. It is a goodish step, and in parts bad going. Rossett Gill, which I took by the way, is one of the coarsest bits in Lakeland. But Bow Fell, hard by, offers much compensation for its ruggedness.

I reached the "Langdale Hotel" considerably late for luncheon, but that did not deter me from eating luncheon. Here I saw the most poetic maiden face that met me in Cumberland. Its owner's name was Jane, and she was born in Borrowdale. She had dreamy grey eyes which it did one good to look at; and she had further a sweet expression and the quietest voice I ever heard in a girl. In her movements she was slow to distraction, but her sweet smile and her grey eyes were like oil upon the waves of impatience. Borrowdale Jane, long may you retain your present seductive exterior, and may your fate be far brighter than that of Mary of Buttermere! I ought, however, to add that Jane's nose was of a shape unfit to associate with her physical excellences.

From Langdale it is a fair step on to Skelwith, and as beautiful an one as you can imagine. Elter Water, as I saw it with the shimmering of the evening mist upon it, and the sun yet stoutly above the horizon, was a sight to start a procession of high-flown adjectives. An hour later Skelwith received me; but I lay by Brathay's pellucid stream for long ere yielding to the hotel's temptations.

Of the next morning I need say nothing. I did but walk to Ambleside, and then to Windermere; and from bright but Phillistinish Windermere I took train to Preston, where my traps waited me.

Cumberland has many joys for mortals in its charming bounds. But the mortals ought to be fairly strong in limb and wind, and with good boots, to taste these joys aright.

## AN OMNIBUS STORY.

SELDOM nowadays is the spectacle of the present writer ascending to the top of an omnibus witnessed by the British public. Whether on account of its rarity, the performance is regarded with a larger share of interest than it perhaps intrinsically merits, it is not for me to say. I only know that of late years I have become painfully aware that my figure is not seen to the best advantage while engaged in athletic exercise, far less when suspended in mid-air. There is an inelegant bulk and rotundity about it unsuited to activity, nor, parenthetically, does it accommodate itself readily to narrow seats and cramped positions. Therefore I especially abstain from bringing it into conspicuous contrast against the sky-line at such an elevation as the act in question necessitates.

Nevertheless, on a recent occasion, the weather being favourable and the inside of the vehicle full, I was tempted to take advantage of the facilities which modern improvements offer for reaching the roof by means of the winding stair. And it is the unexpected experience of that journey which lures me into this desultory gossip. But for the contrivance alluded to, I fear I should never again have enjoyed that most delightful point of observation formerly known as the "knife-board," but now too often converted into "garden seats." Who that has ever travelled on the top of a 'bus, say from Mile End via Holborn and Oxford Street to Shepherd's Bush, or by the Strand and Piccadilly to West Kensington, can fail to be struck by the marvellous sight of men, manners, and customs he then looks down on? Such a microcosm of humanity is unequalled by any city in the world, and but for the familiarity of it, would provoke daily wonder. To the youngster it passes unheeded, but for the oldster, like this individual, it has peculiar and sentimental attractions.

For, luckily or unluckily, as the case may be, he is just old enough to remember the first line of omnibuses that ever traversed the London thoroughfares in July, 1829—they were one year earlier in Paris. His infantile memory has faintly recorded and stowed away in one of the remote pigeon-holes of that antique bureau which he dignifies by the name of "his brain," a feeble picture of Mr. Shillibear's vehicle. He can dimly realise in his mind's eye what a low-roofed, narrow,

stuffy, inconvenient, jolting machine it was, with no seats outside except like those of the stage-coach, one beside the driver, and four close behind him, and how coachman and conductor were habited in uniform with a stiff, bell-crowned, be-corded, and be-tasselled beaver cap, straight-peaked, on the model of the Prussian infantry head-gear of the period. He can recall how, starting from the "Wheat-sheaf" tavern at Paddington, then a thoroughly rural suburb, and pulling up for a minute at the ill-favoured "Yorkshire Stingo" as it turned out of the Edgware Road, "The Omnibus" ran to the Bank by way of the New Road, now the Marylebone, passed the then recently finished Regent's Park, and by St. Pancras Church to Battle Bridge, which, long since turned into King's Cross, was faced on the site of the Great Northern terminus by the London Fever Hospital, and defaced by a life-sized plaster effigy of George the Fourth, surmounting a nondescript kind of obelisk or kiosque—how the 'bus laboured slowly up Pentonville Hill to the "Angel," at Islington, and then descending to the City Road, after crossing the New River, it reached its destination at the Bank through Finsbury and Moorgate—fares, one shilling inside and sixpence out.

Curious and interesting as it always is thus to look back, I found my mood on the occasion of my recent journey sympathetically encouraged by the driver.

I liked the look of him as he pulled up at Piccadilly where I was waiting. He was an elderly man, but hale and hearty, with a genial smile and a ruddy glow about his face, due to the constant exposure to all weathers. His occupation was a hard and sedentary one, but, given a good constitution, there is nothing more healthy. His clear blue eye caught mine, and we seemed to establish a distant acquaintance on the spot.

"Full inside, sir," says the conductor, as I jostled through the crowd to the entrance.

"Then I'll go out," and in a fit of desperation, and remembering the driver's eye, I catch hold of the bright handrail, and, regardless of appearances, up I go, muttering a fervent prayer that I shall not be observed. As soon as I am landed at the top of the winding stair, of course the 'bus starts immediately. I have a momentary vision of my form taking a somersault into a passing dust-cart, and of beholding the world for a second or two upside down; but this air-drawn terror is quickly dis-

pelled by a rap on the knee and a strain on the wrist as I grasp at a bar. No, I am still on the roof, though in a wholly undignified attitude, as was to be expected.

All the garden-seats are occupied save one in the front, and I make for this with the staggering gait of a man on board ship in a storm. By a series of jerks, bounds, clutches at coat-collars, and concussion against other passengers' shoulders, I gain at last the haven of rest, and sink into it gratefully, to find, according to the new arrangement, that although close to the driver, the seat is no longer beside him but higher, and a little to his left rear, with a protecting handrail in front. Once there the position is agreeable enough, if there was but a trifle more leg room. I had looked forward, as in the old days, to a chat with my friendly official on the box, and said as much in his ear.

"Not been up on one of these 'buses before, sir?" enquired the man.

"No, and I don't like it," I reply; "seems to me top-heavy—might capsize at any moment if anything went wrong. I have noticed most of these garden-seated 'buses overhang the wheels. That can't be right; their equilibrium must be very ticklish; the centre of gravity might be easily lost."

"Just so, sir; I have often thought as much; but we must take things as they come in this world."

"But you don't like it, do you? Not so handy for talking to your passengers?"

"No, sir, no; I am all alone in my glory, as you may say, but a little intelligent conversation wiles away the time, you know, sir—shortens the journey considerable—and parties don't seem inclined to gossip now they are perched up so far behind one."

"Driven a 'bus long?" I ask.

"On and off these forty year, sir."

"Good many changes in that time even," I say; "but you can't remember as many in the omnibus line as I can," and then, with the garrulity of my years, I inundate him with a flood of my reminiscences. This leads to a comparison of notes, mutual corrections on small points, such as dates, routes, and so on, and many comments on the recent marvellous increase of traffic and population.

"What it's coming to and what it will be in a few years is more than I can say, or anybody else," adds the coachman. "Lucky they have opened up wider roads where they can; but they'll all be too narrow by-and-by. There now, see here."

We were reaching the Knightsbridge Road near the Albert Gate, and the cross traffic from William Street into the Park occasioned a block in a moment. When we moved again it was marvellous to see the skill of most drivers in steering clear of even a scratch of a wheel, though with but a hair's breadth to spare.

Presently a cab does touch us.

"Ah! stupid!" shouts my friend at the offender, who of course retorts surlily: "Where are you a-coming, then?"

"Go on, you old Guy Fawkes, don't talk to your betters," is the reply, which again provokes the surly one to further speech:

"You—why, you want your 'air jolly well gnawed—that's what you want—you'd be the better for that," and so forth. I only wish I could remember a quarter of the various styles of chaff bandied about; all at the top of the speakers' voices and with shouts and derisive calls as if in the direst anger, but in reality with perfect good-humour.

"I can't quite recollect, though you can, sir, no doubt," resumed the man as we got clear again, "all the demolitions on the City routes—specially those in Holborn, before New Oxford Street gave us a straight run through; I mean when the 'buses had to pass round by the Church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, as I am told."

"Oh, yes," I answered, "there was a hideous pile of filthy tenements just across what is now the wide open entrance to Dudley Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, and another similar narrowing block at Middle Row opposite the end of Gray's Inn Lane. Dyott Street, the Rookeries of Old Bloomsbury and St. Giles's, the cut-throat holes and corners round about the present site of Hart Street and Mudie's Library, all are well within my memory. Of course you yourself have experienced the perils to man and beast on Holborn and Snow Hills before the Viaduct was built. What an abominable nuisance that dip down and up used to be—putting on the skid at the top, taking it off at the bottom, and yoking a third horse on to drag the 'bus up the greasy slope opposite. And talking of slippery roads, which do you prefer, asphalt or wood?"

"Neither, sir. Give me the old Mac-Adam; well kept, there's nothing like it. Noisy and jolting—yes, very likely, but I'm looking at it as a coachman. As for asphalt—that's an invention of the old 'un. It cost more horseflesh than any

one thing could do ; wood is bad enough, but nothing to t'other."

Being a passenger and not a driver I foresaw a difference of opinion on this point, and as I knew my ground might be untenable, I turned the conversation, and went on :

"By-the-bye, I can recall perfectly seeing a Lord Mayor's Show once when I was a boy from a window in the block of houses that stood exactly on the three-cornered open place in front of the Royal Exchange—where the Duke of Wellington's statue now is. That was before the old Exchange was burnt in 1838."

Fortunately a stop was put to my endless reminiscences by a regiment of volunteers with their band rounding the corner of Sloane Street. When our talk was renewed, it turned on modern citizen soldiery, the adoption of the present helmets and tunics for the police, in place of their old tall glaze-crowned hats and swallow-tails, and the general change in all uniforms, especially the Guards' white ducks, worsted epaulettes, and the universal wearing of beards, and so on, after the Crimean War.

The war is a cue which starts my friend off again at full tilt.

"Dear me, yes," says he, "five-and-thirty years ago—why, I was a young man then. At that time I was helping my father in his business of breeding and dealing in horses, and many's the sale of some of his little lots that I've attended at Tattersall's yonder"—we were just passing Knightsbridge Green at the junction of the Kensington and Brompton Roads, and I nodded. "Yes, and I have taken horses for him half over England, Scotland, and Ireland in my time. What we were saying just now about a little pleasant conversation shortening a journey, reminds me of the shortest long journey I ever had, and all on that account. It came about by the merest chance—a curious one. If there's time I'd like to tell it you, sir, for though pleasant, it was near to coming to a bad end. Going far?"

"As far as you go," I answered, for whether I had been or not, I should have gone on now. The man interested me ; he was quite of a superior stamp—one of nature's gentlemen, in fact. I enjoyed talking to him, and I hadn't had so interesting a drive by the 'bus for twenty years.

"Then I will tell you, sir," he resumed. "I was taking a lot of young horses to a place—it doesn't matter where—between

Edinburgh and Glasgow, and left King's Cross one summer night by the mail train. I had a third-class ticket, and after I'd stowed the nags in two adjacent boxes, I took my place accordingly. At Peterborough we stopped for a few minutes—just time to get a cup of coffee, I thought, so I went into the refreshment-room and ordered one. It was an unconscionable time coming, and was scalding hot when it did come. I had to stand and blow it, and just as I had taken a sip and burnt my lips, 'whew !' went the whistle. I dropped the cup, dashed out on to the platform to see the train actually beginning to move. There wasn't a moment to spare. A porter had his hand on the handle of an open first-class door exactly opposite me. Before he could shut it I shoved him aside and went headlong into the carriage, sprawling on the floor. By the time I picked myself up the train was going ahead too fast to stop, and the engine was whistling so furiously that I doubt the driver could not have heard, whatever attempts the officials might be making to pull him up. Well, there I was ; I'd just saved my bacon, and that was all. If I had waited to get into the proper carriage, I should have lost the train and been in the deuce of a mess, with all those five horses and no one to look after them. The first thing I did was to apologise civilly, and explain, as well as I could, what had caused me to intrude in this ill-mannered fashion upon first-class passengers. There were three, and, lucky for me, good-natured gentlemen one and all. 'Never mind, my man,' says one. 'Never mind,' says another. 'Sit down,' says the third, 'there's a seat behind you ; make the best of it ; no great harm done.' So I did sit down, and the best of it was about as good as the best generally is. I knew we should stop again at Grantham, and while I was thanking them for the way they received me, of course I said I should get out and change carriages there.

"But, sir, will you believe it?" continued my omnibus driver, looking half round at me by way of enforcing the importance of his statement. "Will you believe it, sir, before we got to Grantham we were having such a pleasant chat about horses, and dogs, and sport, and the like, and I was describing my own little lot in the boxes behind, that, will you believe it, sir, as we were running into the station, and I was putting my hand out to open the door, these three good-natured gents

\* When Tattersall's was in Grosvenor Place.



insisted — ay, regular insisted — I should go on all the way to Newcastle with them in the carriage where I was? —

"'We'll make up the difference for your ticket,' says they—they were all friends—'and you can give us a few wrinkles, no doubt. It will be better for you and better for us. Here, take a sandwich and a drop of sherry.'"

"One of them was opening a little refreshment-case. Nothing loth, I did as desired, after which cigars were produced, and we all sat there smoking and talking as comfortable as possible. Who would have thought such a pleasant beginning of a journey was to have such a terrible finish? But of a sudden, somewhere near Durham, without the slightest warning, bump goes the carriage, then it sways to and fro for a second, and the next second——"

What happened to the omnibus driver and his companions in that next second I never learned until weeks later. For by the strangest coincidence, just as he reached the cigar stage of his narrative, we had passed off the wood pavement on to some asphalt, and just as the words "the next second" were on his lips, the legs of the off-horse slipped clean from under him, landing him on his side; the 'bus swayed to and fro ominously, stopped dead short, and the poor driver was pitched off his box head foremost. He struck against the one standing horse, and then, ricocheting against the other, fell heavily on to the asphalt. I should have lost my seat also, but for the rail in front, and it seemed a miracle that the whole concern did not capsize. It was the work of a moment, due, I presume, to the sudden check given by the fallen horse. I don't pretend to account for it otherwise. Nor, owing to the confusion that followed, and in the shouting of the crowd that gathered in less than two minutes, can I pretend to say what actually was said or done for some time. Beyond seeing that the driver was insensible and had to be lifted into a cab, I knew nothing. The other passengers on the top got off, so did I, slowly—so slowly that the cab had driven away with its helpless fare and a policeman to St. George's Hospital before I again stood on terra firma. I could gather little from the crowd, but the conductor opined that his mate could not have had the strap from the back of his box buckled, as it ought to have been, round his waist to keep him in his seat.

"He always was an off-handed, high-minded toff," said this red-faced janitor, without removing the straw he was smoking from his lips, "trying to skip up and down into his dickey as if he was twenty, instead of hard upon sixty as he is. I always expected to see him miss his footing and slip some day—that's the way with these nimble ones—and now he's been and half killed himself, poor cove, if he ain't quite."

Needless to say, I was greatly concerned, so I hailed a hansom and drove straight to St. George's. My friend had received a concussion of the brain, and I did not see him again for six weeks. Then he told me he remembered nothing after finding himself toppling over, and will not believe to this day that he was in hospital so long. The conclusion of his story was scarcely less dramatic than the incident which cut it short. He took it up with a dogged conviction that he had recounted its beginning only a few hours before. However, he said one day when he resumed his narrative: "Well, sir, as I was telling you, we were all sitting smoking pleasantly enough, when bump goes the carriage suddenly, bump, bump, and the next instant there was a tremendous crash, and the gentlemen and myself were rattled about like pills in a box. Then the train came to a standstill. It was just getting daylight. We were none of us hurt, only shaken, so we got out, and there in front we saw that our engine had smashed into the tail of a goods train just lapping over on to our line from the siding into which it had been insufficiently shunted. But the curious and astonishing part of it was just this, sir. Not only was that lucky shot of mine at the first-class carriage at Peterborough the cause of my having the pleasantest journey I ever had in my life, but it actually saved my life. For will you believe it, sir, I say again, that very third-class carriage where I had been sitting as far as Peterborough, and which was close to the engine, was crushed up like a match-box. But for that cup of coffee and the delay in its coming, I should have been seated there again and of course killed. Ah, sir, it's a curious world; I don't pretend to understand these things or what regulates them."

He is all right and at work again now. I often exchange nods with him on the road, but I have never soared to his

altitude since. As this memorable journey outside the 'bus was the most momentous I ever experienced, so I prefer that it shall remain my last.

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER I.

HER name was Zenobia. How could a commonplace, nineteenth century girl be expected to live up to a name like that? Moreover, the uncle and aunt with whom she lived were old-fashioned and alightly formal people. They held that a name was a name, and, as such, to be treated respectfully; they did not hold with nick-names, or pet names, or even the occasional employment of the most obvious abbreviations, such as Zen or Nobl. "Her name is Zenobia," they said severely, when her childish companions rashly ventured to shorten it; "be good enough to call her so." And Zenobia soon learnt to hate the name that, not unnaturally, provoked a good deal of juvenile criticism.

Nor did matters mend as she grew older. At school—she only went to a day-school in the next street, where everybody knew all about her, and resented an imaginary inclination on her part to "give herself airs," than which nothing could have been further from poor Zenobia's thoughts—at school, her life was made a burden to her by the hundred and one little devices by which the average school-girl knows so well how to make herself unpleasant to those whom she does not like.

Thus the girl grew up in a somewhat forlorn and friendless fashion, and her natural reserve was intensified tenfold by the lack of sympathetic companionship. The old people were kind to her in their way; but it was not the genial kindness that she craved for, but a sort of perfunctory good treatment that might tend to her physical comfort, but could never touch her heart. Life to Zenobia was colourless, flavourless, uninteresting in the extreme; she was being slowly starved mentally and morally. She was conscious of it in a vague, uncertain way, but had no power to alter circumstances; any more than she had knowledge to account for them, or patience to accept them uncomplainingly. At nineteen, patience of this sort is usually yet a great way off, and Zenobia was neither saint nor heroine, but

merely a commonplace girl in a somewhat chrysalis state.

Zenobia's uncle and aunt lived in the ugliest and dreariest of dull little country towns. It had been necessary for them to live there so long as he was in business; and by the time he had retired from it, some dozen years ago, habit had become second nature, and it had never occurred to them to make a change. The house was a good one, and it stood in a most respectable street; indeed, the respectability of that street was something overwhelming, and had a most depressing effect upon the spirits of those who were select enough to live in it. No one ever passed along it unless from a bitter sense of duty, and the very milk-carts seemed fearful of breaking its solemn calm. The blinds were always drawn more than half-way down, to guard the sanctity of the respectable middle-class life that was going on behind them. No stray cats ever lounged along the pavement, no lost dogs ever applied for temporary relief at the highly varnished doors. Beggars shunned that street; but policemen frequented it, for it was an excellent "beat" for the cultivation of undisturbed thought, occasionally varied by a few chance words with some comely cook over the area railings.

In this respectable street, behind the rigidly lowered blinds, Zenobia had passed her dreary girlhood; and behind those same lowered blinds she was sitting, one sunless November afternoon, reading. At least, she held a book in her hand, and her eyes were fixed upon it; but this studious appearance was merely assumed from a half-unconscious instinct of self-preservation. For the book was not an interesting one; it had been selected for her by her aunt, who now occupied a very straight-backed easy-chair on the other side of the fire. At the moment, the old lady's eyes were closed in quiet slumber; but Zenobia knew her well enough to be profoundly distrustful of this innocent-seeming sleep: she might wake up at any moment, and then, if she found her niece doing nothing——! Zenobia knew better than to risk such a catastrophe.

Her thoughts, however, had wandered far from the book in her hand, though they were scarcely brighter than its pages. The solemn dinner-party at which she would have to be present to-morrow evening was not an entertainment to excite feelings of pleasurable anticipation; she knew her aunt's dinner-parties too well to

expect any enjoyment from them, and this one was likely to be even more oppressively dull than most.

Zenobia stifled a yawn as she pictured to herself the well-known faces gathered for about the hundredth time in her recollection around the garishly gas-lit board.

The gas-lights at her aunt's parties were always brilliant; the conversation never was; but then no one expected brilliant conversation at Slowton. Zenobia had read of it in certain books that had not been selected for her by her aunt, and wondered sometimes whether she should ever be so happy as to listen to it in the flesh; not in Slowton—oh, no! She was not quite so foolish as to believe that possible, even in a day-dream; but somewhere, in some brighter, less hopelessly prosaic place. It didn't seem very probable even in her most sanguine moments, but youth is naturally hopeful; and despite the greyness of her life, Zenobia was young still, though hitherto she had scarcely been aware of the fact.

An unwonted sound presently roused her from her sombre reverie, and she raised her head, and listened intently. An impious organ-grinder had brought his vulgar instrument into Queen Street, and was profaning its exclusive echoes with daring popular airs. It was not a bad organ as street-organs go, and the airs—though unquestionably vulgar—were bright, and full of an alluring liveliness. On that dull November afternoon they sounded very cheerful, Zenobia thought, and she rose softly, and stole to the window—which stood a little open, for the day was warm—to hear them better.

Surely Queen Street had never seen such a sight before as the one Zenobia's wondering eyes now rested on, as she peeped cautiously from below the lowered blind! A dark-eyed Italian was grinding away merrily, his white teeth flashing in his frequent smiles, while a gorgeously attired monkey danced, "high and disposedly" as Queen Elizabeth herself, on the organ before him. It was a spectacle that would have filled her aunt with horror and indignation, but to Zenobia it had a certain indescribable charm. The intense life in the man's mobile face, and the bright scarlet coat of the monkey that lent a touch of vivid colour to the grey November afternoon, caught her fancy; and she raised the blind softly so as to see better.

Zenobia was not the only person in Queen Street who had come to the

window, attracted by the cheerful sounds. Somebody at the house opposite had not only pulled up the blind as high as it would go, and thrown up the window, but was leaning boldly out of it, his folded arms resting on the sill. He was quite unawed by the oppressive respectability of his surroundings, as was shown clearly enough by his frank laughter.

There was something infectious in the sound of that laughter, and Zenobia forgot to be scandalised at hearing it in such a place, and under such circumstances. She forgot, even, that she herself was plainly visible from that window opposite—ay, and from a great part of the street—as she stood there, staring with wide eyes of astonishment at the little drama that was being enacted in the road below.

Presently the young fellow at the window opposite turned away for a moment, and called back to some one in the room behind. A boy joined him then; a boy whom Zenobia knew slightly, and would have liked to know better, but for her shyness and reserve. He was the cripple son of wealthy parents, who idolised—but did not know what to do with—him; and were always trying educational experiments in the hope that they might by good luck hit upon something that would help them out of the difficulty.

The boy's pale face contrasted pitifully with the manly strength and beauty of his companion's features, but it reflected their sunny smile; and Zenobia thought she had never seen poor Cecil Paxton look so bright as when he presently rained down a whole handful of coppers on to the pavement below, and laughed at the comical agility with which the scarlet-coated monkey picked them up, and the extraordinary genuflexions with which he acknowledged them.

But the sound of that merry laughter unfortunately aroused Zenobia's slumbering aunt to a startled consciousness that something untoward was going on, somewhere in the vicinity.

"Zenobia, what is it?" she asked drowsily; "I thought I—come away from that window, Zenobia!" with a sudden change to a higher, shriller key. "Zenobia, I wonder at you! What are you doing there?"

"Looking out," said the girl briefly, as she turned away, flushing hotly.

"Looking out! Yes, I can see that. But has it occurred to you that if you can look out, others can look in? A pretty sight

for all the gossips of Slowton to see you—my niece, Zenobia Brabourne—staring out of window like any vulgar nurse-girl! And you've pulled the blind up, too, just for all the world as if we were second-rate seaside lodgings! Draw it down again directly, and come back to your chair. What did you see out there?"

"A monkey and an organ-grinder," Zenobia replied; and as she spoke she felt bitterly conscious that the little scene, thus described, had somehow lost all its picturesque charm of quaintness and colour. No wonder her aunt smiled disdainfully.

"A monkey! How childish! An organ-grinder! How vulgar! Really, at nineteen you ought not to take interest in such things. When I was your age——"

Still the reproving voice scolded on, and Zenobia heard, but heeded not. After all, her offence had not been so very grave a one. She had been silly, perhaps, but what of that? The young man opposite must be a good deal more than nineteen years old, yet he was not ashamed to watch the monkey's antics. He would not think her even silly for laughing at them, too—not that she had laughed. A faint smile had just parted her red lips, but that was all. Zenobia was too unaccustomed to laughter to take to it naturally; she had been interested rather than amused, and the charge of vulgarity her aunt had seen fit to hurl at her, had recalled her to herself with a rude shock.

But the charge was unjust, and Zenobia knew it. Therefore she listened in silence till the stream of the old lady's reproofs was exhausted, and dreary silence once more reigned in the rapidly darkening room, behind the sheltering blinds.

## CHAPTER II.

It was the terrible twenty minutes before dinner, and the guests were arriving rapidly.

They were none of them remarkable in any way, so far as could be judged from appearances; nor were the scraps of conversation that could be disentangled from the general chatter, exactly of a nature to impress an impartial listener with a high opinion of the intellectual powers of the speakers. Very worthy people, all of them; good, solid people; who went to church once every Sunday because it was the proper thing to do, and had a respectable balance at their bankers'. The sort of people, in fact, who had made Slowton the town it was; and were ad-

mirably adapted to live in it with comfort and complacency when made.

Zenobia, standing a little apart—a stately young figure, clad all in white of a somewhat severe cut—saw and heard; and wondered what enjoyment such people could find in meeting others so exactly like themselves; or whether, indeed, anybody ever enjoyed anything—at least, in a Slowton drawing-room. The girl was feeling hopelessly bored, and the efforts she had conscientiously made to contribute a few feeble remarks to the general small-talk had been singularly unsuccessful, and met with but scanty encouragement. She had, therefore, lapsed into silence, though she felt bitterly conscious that her silence would be taken as much amiss as her efforts at conversation had been. Some people seem doomed to be always in the wrong; and Zenobia knew that she was one of them. It was not an agreeable conviction.

"Have you heard about the Paxtons' latest fad?" said old Mrs. Turner to Mr. Brabourne. "I shall be surprised if they don't make a fool of that boy Cecil among them."

"Very likely you may be right, but it is a difficult question, a very difficult question," he replied pompously. "The boy has ability, I understand, but his education hitherto has been extremely desultory, and if this young fellow—what's his name again? Devondale, eh?—if he can induce Cecil——"

"Mrs. Paxton and Mr. Devondale."

Zenobia started; he had not been invited, she knew; but there, following Mrs. Paxton into the room, was the identical young man she had seen at the opposite window the day before.

He was faultlessly attired in evening dress, and his handsome features were composed in an expression of pensive gravity very different from the look they had worn on that previous occasion; but she knew him at once, and flushed slightly as she recalled all the circumstances under which she had seen him, and—terrible thought!—he had seen her.

"I must apologise for Mr. Paxton's absence," the lady was explaining meantime, in a loud but not unmusical voice. "So unfortunate, but he had to go to London on business. So I have brought Mr. Devondale to represent him—Mr. Devondale, Mrs. Brabourne."

"Very pleased to see Mr. Devondale, I am sure; though sorry for the reason."

Mrs. Brabourne smiled stiffly as she shook hands with him. She was not quite sure yet whether he was a suitable person to sit at her table, or whether Mrs. Paxton had not taken a liberty in bringing him. She eyed him a little distrustfully, therefore; for he was so handsome, so utterly unlike the Slowton type, that she doubted—she didn't wish to be uncharitable, of course, but she doubted whether he would be quite—

"It's so tiresome having one's numbers thrown out at the last," Mrs. Paxton went on, with serene unconsciousness of her hostess's feelings of perplexity; "and I thought that perhaps you might be thirteen without Mr. Paxton—I never sit down thirteen to dinner under any circumstances—so it was a very lucky thing I had Mr. Devondale in the house. Should you have been thirteen if I hadn't brought him?"

"No; I never give such small dinner-parties as that!" with dignity. "It is really hardly worth while. I suppose, as no one here knows anything about Mr. Devondale," she added, lowering her voice to a confidential murmur, "I had better send him in with Zenobia! Otherwise I might give offence."

"Oh, he's quite the gentleman, I assure you. His father's a clergyman, I believe, and Mr. Paxton was quite satisfied with his references."

Mrs. Paxton's voice, even when slightly lowered, was still distinctly audible to the entire company; but, if Mr. Devondale heard, he betrayed no consciousness that he knew himself to be the subject of such flattering remarks, unless a slight contraction at the corners of his well-cut mouth might be taken as a sign of half-contemptuous amusement.

Then Mr. Brabourne, after a moment's surprised contemplation of this unlooked-for guest, stepped forward and welcomed him civilly enough; but as any geniality of manner was impossible to this frosty-natured man, his greeting was little calculated to remove the unpleasant impression his wife's stiff reception of Mr. Devondale might well be supposed to have left on the mind of the young fellow himself, and of all who observed it. However, geniality was not highly thought of in Slowton, so that the lack of it was the less remarked.

"Dear me, 'speak of the—' and we all know what happens!" Mrs. Turner exclaimed. "Zenobia, was your aunt aware—why, what a colour you've got, child! I hadn't observed the room was so hot."

"Shall I open the window a little?" and Zenobia turned to it, thankful to have something to occupy her, and distract her attention from the little scene at the other end of the room—a scene that filled her with wrath and mortification.

"Not for the world! I can't endure the night air right on my back, and you must be mad to propose such a thing," Mrs. Turner said indignantly. "Do you wish me to be in my bed to-morrow, and wrung with pain? No, no; I must decline to oblige you so far."

Zenobia closed the curtains again and sat down resignedly.

In another moment Mrs. Brabourne bore down upon her niece, followed by the unbidden guest, and hastily introduced him to her; afterwards bustling on her way to explain to the highly respectable old gentleman who was to have taken Zenobia in to dinner the unavoidable change in the programme.

"I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before, Miss Brabourne!"

Zenobia raised her eyes, flushing slightly. He remembered her, then, this self-possessed young man, with the bright smile and the pleasant voice! The flash of recognition she had seen in his eyes, as they met hers in that first moment of his entrance, had really been for her, and for her alone. It was a gratifying but alarming thought.

"I did not know that you saw me," she said shyly.

"You thought I was too much occupied with the monkey?" he laughed. "It really was a clever little beast, but not quite so absorbing as all that. I am to have the pleasure of taking you in to dinner," he added, as the general move to the dining-room began. "I am going to ask you to instruct me in all the Slowton politics."

"You will not find them very interesting," guardedly.

"I'm not so sure of that," he replied, as they fell into their place in the stately little procession. "It must be a very dull place in which there is absolutely nothing to interest me."

"Slowton is a very dull place indeed," Zenobia said emphatically.

"You speak with such an air of conviction that I must suppose you have lived here some time?"

"All my life, if one can call it living. Nothing ever happens here. You would hardly believe it, but that monkey yesterday was quite an event—a very undesirable one, my aunt thought."

"You certainly appear to suffer from a lack of incident," he observed thoughtfully. "Cecil has told me something of this, but—you know Cecil, of course?"

"A little; yes."

"Are you aware that the boy worships you afar off? No, I am not joking," as she turned upon him eyes of frank astonishment. "He would like to know you more than a little."

"Poor boy, how dull he must be!"

"He, or his life?" he asked, with an amused smile.

"Do you honestly think that we look an interesting race, we natives of Slowton?" she retorted, lowering her voice a little, as she glanced along the line of faces opposite. "Do you think life can be anything but dull among such people as we are?"

He, too, following the direction of her eyes, glanced at those Slowton faces; and then at the delicate profile and proudly poised head of the girl beside him.

"No," he admitted slowly; "the natives of Slowton are not an interesting-looking race, but—there are exceptions. The exceptions, while proving the rule, make amends for all the rest."

"I suppose Cecil is an exception?"

"Most decidedly so; I find him a most interesting bear."

"A bear?"

How pretty she was when she raised her great dark eyes with that puzzled look in them! Mr. Devondale might be pardoned for thinking that Cecil was not the only exception to the general rule of Slowton dullness.

"Yes, a bear. I'm his bear-leader, you know."

"You! Not really?"

"Really and truly. The doubt you express is not at all complimentary to my powers of tuition," he added, with a little laugh. "Do you know your scepticism wounds me very deeply?"

"No, no; it is not your powers I doubt, but the fact that you should care to use them for such a purpose. Surely it is waste of time for you to stay in such a place as Slowton!"

"Now I fear you overrate my little gifts even more than you previously seemed to undervalue them," he replied, with more gravity than he had yet shown. "I don't suppose the world will be much the worse for my temporary seclusion in the solemn shades of Queen Street, while I myself——"

"Yes!" as he paused.

"I hope to be much the better. You

don't doubt, I trust, that I'm capable of improvement?"

"I know so little about you——"

"True;" as she hesitated, looking at him with serious, questioning eyes. "When you know me better, you will answer my question, and, I hope, favourably."

"It is not very likely I shall ever know you better."

There was a tone of something very like regret in the soft voice, and Mr. Devondale wondered a little if he, too, might be counted as "an event" in the dull life this girl led at Slowton. He hoped most devoutly that it might be so.

"Why not? Our houses are on friendly terms; we exchange visits, and all that sort of thing. You live in Slowton, and I propose to make a long stay here. Oh, we must be better acquainted, Miss Brabourne—unless, of course, you do not choose to associate with a tutor, a bear-leader?"

"Oh, you cannot think I meant that," she exclaimed, in a tone of dismay. "It is not a question of my 'choosing' at all, but of Slowton society; and that"—she raised her eyebrows expressively—"you see what that is!"

"I do; and I suppose it won't recognise me except on sufferance?"

"I don't know; I never heard of a case like yours," she replied slowly. "The boys all go to school, so that there are no tutors in the town. With Cecil, of course, it is different. But in Slowton we never seem to know anybody any better. It isn't the way of the place."

"A most unfriendly way the Slowton one appears to be! Can nothing be done to alter it?"

"Would it be worth while? Do you really think that you would be the better for knowing more of the people here?"

"Speaking generally, perhaps not; but in some particular instances—like Cecil's, you know"—"and yours," he would have liked to add, but the utter lack of self-consciousness in the beautiful eyes that were raised so earnestly to his, kept him silent. It was evident that this girl knew nothing of the language of compliment. "Yes, in some instances I would like to know more of the people here."

"I doubt whether you will ever do so," she replied, in all seriousness.

Mr. Devondale did not question her conviction further, but rather devoted his attention to the opportunity he now enjoyed of improving his acquaintance with one of the people of Slowton; though he

felt that it was almost an insult to classify her, even in jest, with the wearisomely prosperous, vulgarly self-complacent men and women around them.

But it was not very easy to get acquainted with Zenobia. She was reserved, and had none of the little social arts by which the girls he usually met knew how to help the conversation along, and give general statements a personal application. She was so serious, so intensely in earnest about everything, that he found himself growing serious, too, and talking to her as gravely as though he were a hundred and one, instead of barely five-and-twenty. By-and-by, he thought, when he knew her a little better, he would try if it might not be possible to bring a smile to the pale, serious face, and the light of laughter to the grave grey eyes. By-and-by, but not now. She could not be expected to smile and laugh all at once; she, who had grown up in Slowton; upon whose sad young soul the crushing Slowton influences still weighed heavily! She would have to learn to smile, to learn to laugh; and he, Francis Devondale, was the man to teach her; of that he was assured.

When the ladies had withdrawn, he had every opportunity of observing the amazing paucity of ideas that was the most remarkable characteristic of the men of Slowton. The Rector alone, who was a gentleman and a scholar, occasionally had something to say that was really worth saying, and said it well. He found in him a pleasant companion during the somewhat lengthy interval that elapsed before they all repaired to the drawing-room; where Mrs. Brabourne was entertaining the other ladies with a long story about some little fracas that had occurred some days before below-stairs, while Zenobia played a classical piece on the piano with great correctness, and no feeling; but then the piece did not seem to require any.

"Will some one else give us a little music?" Mrs. Brabourne said, as Zenobia's final chords were drowned in a burst of small-talk. "Mrs. Paxton, you play, I know."

"Oh, get Mr. Devondale to sing: he sings splendidly—just like a professional!" she said carelessly.

"But, my dear Mrs. Paxton, surely

professional singing would be a little out of place in my drawing-room!"

"Oh, but he is not really professional, you know; he only sings just like a professional, which is quite a different thing."

"Mrs. Paxton is getting a little mixed in my profession," Mr. Devondale remarked aside to Zenobia, whom he had speedily joined at the piano; "she forgets that I am only the bear-leader, not the bear; so it is unfair to expect a performance from me."

"But you will sing, will you not?"

"If you wish it, certainly!" with a slight emphasis on the pronoun. "But to oblige Mrs. Paxton, no!"

"I do wish it, indeed!"

So when Mrs. Brabourne presently asked him, she did not ask in vain.

Certainly, it was not often that a Slowton drawing-room heard such singing as Mrs. Brabourne's did that night.

A more cultured audience would have known better how to appreciate the rare beauty of voice, and high excellence of style and training; but even upon the Slowton mind some impression was made by a performance so utterly unlike anything it was accustomed to, and the company paid Mr. Devondale the extraordinary compliment—at least, it was an extraordinary compliment in Slowton circles—of listening to him in profound silence.

But Francis Devondale cared little what impression he made upon the Slowton mind in general. He saw nothing—cared to see nothing—but a slight, girlish figure, clad in white, framed in the sombre window-curtains; a fair, sweet face, crowned with wavy dark hair; deep grey eyes, full of changing expression, of ever-varying light and shadow, of sympathetic emotion. Those eyes were a revelation to him while he sang; even as his singing, with all its passion and its power, was a revelation to her.

But the singing ceased, the revelation was over; and soon afterwards Mrs. Brabourne's party broke up, and her guests took their departure.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAWAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hopsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER VII. WITHOUT LEAVE.

DRUMMER COGHLAN had led a somewhat chequered existence. In the courts of Love his conduct had been too ardent, and disaster had resulted. In this manner. A certain Corporal of the regiment died, leaving a widow—in truth no novice to the sorrows of bereavement, since she was in the habit of designating the said Corporal as "Number three." It will be seen at once that there was something attractive about the lady in question. To sum up these charms it may be said, she was a neat, trim, bustling, dark-eyed little woman, who kept her home—such as it was—as clean as a new pin; she was sober, industrious, and devoted to the regiment in which she had already enlisted three times. It was said that once, during one of her short widowhoods, a certain daring civilian had "offered marriage," with such results to himself that he was found sitting on a stone outside the barrack gates, weeping bitterly, with a bump the size of a duck's egg on his head, the mark of the too zealous application of a broom-handle. It ultimately transpired that, in a frenzy of indignation, the fair one had asked him with frantic sarcasm, "What he took her for, to think she'd desert the old regiment, and take up with a fool of a civilian as didn't know how to put his feet to the ground?"

This was after her second venture. Again she took the shilling; and again was left lamenting. On the morning after the Corporal, with shriek of fife and roll of

drum, and many black-clad females following on, had been laid to rest, the widow presented herself before the Colonel at Orderly Room. Drummer Coghlan also presented himself, looking mighty solemn, but not one whit abashed, and supported by his comrade, who kept saying "Drat the woman" in a blood-curdling whisper at intervals, and passing the back of his hand across his mouth as if haunted by dreamy visions of the cauteen. The widow was also accompanied by a friend, who kept imploring her to "hold up," and "keep up," and "be calm now"; the widow looking infinitely demure, dressed in a neat suit of black, but not in weeds. She "never wore them things for any of 'em, and wasn't goin' to begin now," she said, "but paid respect where such was doo, an' didn't grudge a bombazine at one-and-nine, nor make complaints of cost of ribbing with a neat satin edge." Her appearance, therefore, in consequence of this noble disregard of expense, was beyond reproach; and her demeanour matched her dress.

She spoke in a clear, pleasant-toned voice, looking the fiery Colonel calmly in the face.

If you please, she wished to put in a crime against Drummer Coghlan there. Her feelings had been that harrowed and hurt as words would fail to tell if she spoke for a blessed week, and the gentlemen had patience to listen to her.

The Colonel glared—a habit he had, which meant absolutely nothing—and asked her, kindly enough, to put her complaint in as few words as possible.

She knew, and every woman as stood the Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment knew, they had a friend in the Colonel—God bless him! They knew he wasn't one to see them put upon or belittled—



not he! Here an impatient wave of the Chief's slender, finely-formed hand, and a grunt from the Major standing by, stayed the stream of her eloquence.

"Can't you do as you're told?" put in the Adjutant, speaking in a mighty different voice from that in which he whispered soft nothings in the ears of the fair ones at the Castle balls.

The widow gave never a glance in his direction. In the presence of the Colonel of the regiment she recognised no others, charmed they never so wisely. She wished to put in a crime against the drummer there; he had "acted unseemly" to her. She was a desolate, unprotected, lone woman with no husband at her back; she claimed—with confidence—the protection of her Colonel.

"What did the man do?" said that potentate, tapping the orderly-room table with a gold pencil-case.

Well, it was thusly: when she and her friends were standing round the "open grave" of her late husband, and the Chaplain was reading the good word over him, that varmint there, he tore the fly-leaf out of his blessed prayer-book, wrote on it with a pencil, and had it passed round to her, the bereaved and sorrowing widow. Here she showed every sign of being about to shed a tear, and the friend who accompanied her exhorted her audibly "not to give way."

"Well, and what was on the paper?" said the Colonel, as grave as a judge, and glaring round officers, non-coms, clerks, and privates, to be sure that no covert smile lurked anywhere.

"If I must take my dyin' oath, sir, these were the very words:

"Give me first chance. Your devoted lover,  
JIM COGHLAN."

And it's more than any decent woman can stand, please, sir, to have her feelin's jumped on, and trod on, and hurt that way, so it is."

Drummer Coghlan's explanation was simplicity itself.

"You see, sir," said the accused, "the article was good, and shure and shure enough I knew the bidding would be brisk, so I'd a mind to get first chance; an' no offence meant at all at all, an' sorry if any's taken, saving your presence."

"You have behaved in a most—ahem!—unseemly manner——" began the Colonel, still glaring, and stonily severe of demeanour.

"Shure an' I'd no manin' of that soart at all at all," put in poor Coghlan, at which the Adjutant thundered: "Silence!" and the orderly-room clerks shook in their shoes.

"You have conducted yourself in a most improper manner," commenced the Colonel again; and by the fierce and threatening looks of the bystanders, Coghlan was kept in silence. "You must make an ample apology for what you have done, and——"

"I shall, sir; it's myself will do that same, gladly," roared the too ardent lover; "an' it's sorry I am this day if I vexed the lady, an' humbly I axes her pardon."

The Colonel evidently condoned the interruption for the sake of the frank penitence it expressed. He tapped the table—gently—with the gold pencil-case, and smiled; yet so guardedly that no one dared follow suit.

Drummer Coghlan had not, however, said his last word; and, like the postscript of a lady's letter, this last word contained the cream of the whole matter.

Drawn up to a rigidity of "tenahun!" almost impossible to describe in words, the rejected suitor delivered himself of his pithy valediction to the Court assembled:

"It's all right, sir; I can see I'm forgiven by the tear in her oi. All the same, begging yer pardon for my bouldness in shpakin', she moight go further and fare worse."

With a sudden jerk, suggestive of being pulled from behind, Drummer Coghlan disappeared from view, while the Colonel was taken with a fit of coughing, and requested an orderly clerk to close a side window, from which, it might be presumed, a draught made itself felt; the man obeying with a face like a mute at a funeral, but managing to tip a wink with the eye next the wall to a comrade near, who presently burst into a violent and apoplectic fit of sneezing.

Orderly Room over, and the virtuous relict duly escorted by sympathetic females to the quarters that would still be hers for the three months during which a tender Government houses and feeds the bereaved one, fearful sounds began to proceed from the ante-room, while the Sergeants' mess-room was equally uproarious.

In the former, Lieutenants Blizzard and Verrinder were laid out straight on four chairs, calling imperiously for brandies and sodas; while in the latter, the Scotch Sergeant who reigned supreme at the hospital had crossed from his own

comfortable diggings, taken a seat among his hilarious compeers, and—smiled; afterwards proceeding to order a foaming beaker of ale, as if to support nature under such an unusual display of emotion.

In the hospital, when the Sergeant smiled, the orderlies sniggered; on the very rare annual occasions when he laughed out loud, they roared, frightening timid patients. Drummer Coghlan was decidedly droll; therefore the canny Scotchman smiled, and the Sergeants' mess was irradiated. The last touch of the episode—that parting sha't of love, which hinted to the Corporal's widow that perhaps, by her fastidiousness, she was losing a good thing—was almost deserving of a laugh, indeed quite; but the day was warm, and the Sergeant could not rise to the occasion. Meanwhile the Colonel had entered the ante-room. Blizzard and Chubby started to their feet, suddenly grave as judges, but at the sound of the Chief's hearty "By Gad!" and heartier laughter, their merriment broke out again, and the incident of Drummer Coghlan's indiscreet wooing became established as a regimental "good story," to be told and retold as occasion might require. At the end of her three months' "maintenance," the Corporal's widow became again a wife, and, at the time our story opens, had attained to the high but, in my opinion, very undesirable elevation of quartermaster's wife—that is, one with the rank of an officer's wife, but none of the social position; too often, indeed, a woman of no friends, dwelling upon a debateable ground that is arid and drear, where no sun shines, and no fair flower blows. She was not one to thrust herself forward, and have to be held at arm's length—not she—but it may be doubted if there were not times in that trying to live up to a position thrust upon her by the promotion of her worthy husband from the ranks, when Drummer Coghlan's Parthian shot was called to mind, and she wished herself back among the simple friends of old, and would have been glad to have taken a turn and had a good gossip at "the tubs."

His unlucky amatory adventure made Drummer Coghlan a hero in a certain small way. There was a daring about the thing that pleased. He was, indeed, a most gay and cheery-hearted soldier, and embarrassingly popular with the children of the regiment, so that to pass along the married quarters was somewhat of an ordeal.

"Arrah, now," he would say to the procession that gradually gathered at his coat-tail, "don't be followin' on after me as if I was a volunteer in a country town. 'Tain't as it ought to be, an' me one as serves Her Majesty, an' wears a number on me cap! Have more conduct, now, the lot of ye!"

But "the lot of ye" didn't care a straw. They shouted to one another, "Here's Coghlan come, hurry up now and see him." And so the procession grew, and the married men, lounging at their doors with tunics unbuttoned, forage-caps on the back of their heads, and pipes smoking, laughed and said it was "a pity Jim hadn't a few kids of his own, and wouldn't he make the grand father now?" while the women, with rosy arms flecked with snow-white suds, looked out at their doors and laughed too.

Seen through the eyes of the children, the handsome drummer's attractions were indeed transcendent. Was he not the happy possessor of three exquisite beings called Marmozettes—things with frills round their necks like ladies, and sleek tails, striped in alternate black and grey? Was it not one of the supreme sensations of life to hear this trio chatter, and whinny, and watch them thrust tiny furry fingers into the recesses of Jim's pockets to search for a stray nut or sweetie? Then the names these wonderful creatures owned to—Shadrach, Meshach, and little Abednego—"for shure, they come out o' the land that's loike a burnin' foiry furnace," Jim would add in explanation. Abednego was the most entirely entrancing of the three; also by much the smallest, indeed could crouch into the palm of your hand, lifting a tiny elfin face, with great pathetic eyes, from a bundle of grey fur and a curled-round tail. Was it any wonder the children of the regiment followed Drummer Coghlan? Might there not always be the delightful chance of Shadrach lurking in a tail-pocket, or little Abednego showing a wee nose-tip from his master's waistcoat? It was only when Coghlan was in the negligence of "undress" that these accidents could happen, for at other times the three marmozettes inhabited the innermost recesses of his doubled-up cot, and had grown so 'cute from long experience of the service, that they dived and ducked at the sound of the inspecting Sergeant's footsteps, and had been seen to take a sly peep at his retreating form. Nor was admiration for Coghlan's pets

confined to the children of the married quarters. The diminutive son of the senior Captain was wont to point and say "monkseys," to the vast admiration of his family, when he saw the owner of those animals taking his walks abroad; and as to "little Missy," why, every one knew how her gentle heart clung to them! Who, then, was "little Missy"?

If you had asked that question of any one in the Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment, that person would have stared at your lack of the most ordinary knowledge. When the buglers bugled, they stared up at Major Henneker's quarters; when the fifeers fied as the sun went down, the young rascals flung up an eye to the casements without stirring their sleek heads the hundredth part of an inch; and many times and oft a small figure in white, with sunny head held coquettishly on one side, and little hands clasped, and falling against her Kate Greenaway robe in front, looked daintily out of window at her "sojor boys" below. Little Missy may be best described as an "unexpected blessing." The Major's daughter was tall and shapely; his two stalwart sons were launched in life; all traces of a nursery had finally disappeared from the home, and then—little Missy came, like an angel, or a butterfly, or some lovely bird that settles down upon a garden unawares. Nobody had got over the surprise even yet. She was their wonder, their miracle, their dear delight and joy. Even Mrs. Musters had a smile for Missy, and in the very act of hoping they would not spoil the child completely, spoiled her most atrociously herself.

To deny anything to little Missy—who would be so bold? And so "the world went very well" for Mrs. Henneker's wee daughter; the said daughter being a precocious, quaint-mannered, and dignified little creature, as is often the case with these late-born children.

Behold, then, one night, when the bright summer was just past its zenith, Drummer Coghlan, crossing the innermost barrack square, the quarters of the married officers, finds himself confronted by a ghost; quite a small ghost, it is true, but white as milk, with little, noiseless, pearly feet curling up over the stones, and a golden head shining in the moonlight. Drummer Coghlan stood still; but on came the ghost, and presently stood at his knee, boldly clasping his left leg with two small hands.

"They're gone to a party—every one," said the ghost in a clear, small voice,

perfectly self-possessed and singularly composed, the while she let go the scarlet-striped leg to open her arms ever so wide, so as to duly express the amount of people who had absented themselves from her abode that evening.

"I am being quite triumphant. I am doing as I like," she continued; but in spite of her "triumphant" frame of mind, little Missy—her own fair name of Coralie was quite lost to fame—cast swift and furtive glances at the house, where the lightless windows told of the absence of the family.

Drummer Coghlan was terrified to see that his young companion was attired in the very slight costume of one long white night-dress, the which she had now gathered artistically in one hand, so as to give her little pink feet fair play. A cascade of hair like spun gold hung down her back, glittering like a river of gold. Her eyes—the angels have such eyes as little Missy, darkly violet in the tender moonlight, grave, steadfast, sweet beyond things of earth—looked up into his appalled countenance. Drummer Coghlan, being a staunch Catholic, though, perhaps, not a very devout one, was fain to cross himself and mutter an invocation to Saint Joseph, that favourite saint of the people.

"There's first post," said the little one, as the air was suddenly cut by the acrid notes of a bugle. "All my soldiers must come in and go to bed. Do you know, Mr. Drummer, what I saw the other night? I am very triumphant when I'm by my own self. I do what I like. I got out of bed and stood on a chair at the window, and I saw one of my soldiers come over the wall there, at the little corner there. He was just like my cat—my Minnymin, you know—he sat on the wall, and then he felled down and fled away."

Coghlan was at his wife's end; was he not listening to rank blasphemy out of that baby mouth?

"Heaven save us, Missy, and the holy saints be wid us this night an' day, there isn't a man stands the Hundred and Ninety-Third as would do the like."

"There was," said Missy, standing tall and slim upon the stones, her head thrown back proudly. "You are a wicked story, Mr. Drummer Co'gan, an' I shan't be friends with you any more. I haven't told nobody but you. It's a secret—and you are wicked to say it isn't true. Why shouldn't the soldier be like Minnymin if he liked to?"

Coghlan's cap was off, and his hair, of which the parting was a miracle, all rumbled up in an agony of amazement.

"Save us all!" he ejaculated at last, "to break out of barracks, an' them er—er—er—hem!—Fenlans drillin' on ivery hillside, an' thimselves the spawn o' the divel an' all his hosts, savin' yer little ladyship's presence in the namin' of the gintleman."

"Oh, don't mind," said Missy. "I don't—I don't want to talk any more about the soldier on the wall, he's getting tiresome. What I want to know is this: where is little Bednego? I want to see him so very badly—I do indeed."

"If Missy will let me lift her up and carry her over the stones, and take her safe home to good Eliza, I'll go and fetch Bednego this blessed minute," said Coghlan promptly, with all a soldier's readiness to take advantage of a weak place in the enemy's outworks.

"But how did you know my nurse's name was 'good Eliza'?" said Missy, with unlooked-for quickness. "And she's not always 'good Eliza,' she's sometimes 'bad Eliza' when she worries me, and makes tangles in my hair, and won't let me do what I like. Did she tell you her name was good Eliza?"

Night was merciful, and veiled the drummer's blushes.

"Never you mind," he said, stooping over the child and gathering her in his arms; "just you let me carry you home, Missy. Hearken now, the first post is done—all good people should be abed."

A long-drawn-out, lugubrious note—the last of the three that are supposed to say, "Come ho—me," had died away; but the ring, though distant, of many footsteps broke the silence. The men who had been out and got no pass for later hours were returning; laughter and voices could be heard, and mingling soon with these came shrill cries and calls, and a flying figure was seen coming from the Major's house with arms wildly extended, and cap-streamers flying.

"Look at 'Liza," said little Missy, with quiet contempt, "what a fuss she is making!"

To this Drummer Coghlan found no reply ready. His heart was beating beneath his tunic at such a rate, that had little Abednego been lurking there, the creature would have been frightened to death; his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth, and really, when

Eliza came rushing up to him, kissing and clutching the child, and calling on Heaven to bless the brave soldier who had saved her darling from possible death and disaster, the poor man was in sad case, and—after the manner of his kind, who always resort to the empty sound of strong language in moments of keen emotion—proposed for himself an appalling future, and still meekly carrying little Missy, followed good Eliza to her master's house, and at length set his pretty burden down upon the dining-room table.

"Well?" said Missy, looking gravely into his face, and totally ignoring the fact that Eliza was narrating a tearful story of how she had found her young lady's blessed bed empty, and run distracted-like all over the house, and lastly out into the square.

Then Coghlan capitulated at once, said he wouldn't be a minute fetching little Abednego, and Missy, with a sedate "I'm glad you're going to keep your promise, you know," set herself to wait with what patience she could muster. She even let 'Liza put a natty cape about her shoulders, and slippers on her bits of feet, and put a stool upon the table for her to sit in state, enthroned like a queen, and then Coghlan came back.

But for a while, Missy could not make out where "Bednego" was one bit. She put out her precious hand and touched Jim's side-pockets, and fearfully pinched the flap of his coat, but no Bednego appeared. At last, however, she gave a squeal of high delight, and not unpleasant fear, for there, clinging wildly about Coghlan's waist, was a slender, grey furry arm with little prehensile fingers.

"Oh, fetch him out quite entirely—do, dear Mr. Drummer, do. Can I spread him same as I spread Minnymin—will he mind?"

Then, with her head on one side, and her divine eyes looking up imploringly:

"I don't think he'd mind if I spreaded him. . . ." This with a deep sigh of longing. . . .

"He'd ought to be proud of it, Miss," said Coghlan, bringing the unwilling little animal, who held on like grim death to his master's garments, into full view. What a pretty little fellow he was; so sleek, so shy, so soft and downy! His frill gave him a knowing look; his eyes were big and bright; and with what a meek, long-suffering gaze he gently submitted to be "spreaded," that is, laid

out straight on his back to his fullest extent, and so held like Minnymin!

"He likes to be spreaded," said Missy, regarding him with great complacency; then, with a sigh of satisfaction, "so does Minnymin."

Perhaps it was just as well that the gift of speech was denied to the individuals in question, otherwise Missy might have found herself in a minority; as it was, there was no one to contradict her, and soon she had little Abednego cuddled up to the breast of her nightgown, with his tail confidently curled round her arm. Not only so, but Eliza fetched a clear white grape from the pantry, and oh, what joy to see him eat it!

Then both Missy and Abednego grew sleepy, and faintly protesting, but for all that with her tired head falling on to 'Liza's shoulder, the former was carried back into the nest from which she should never have flown; and the latter, taking one spring into Major Henneker's special chair, would have rolled himself up into a ball to rest, if Coghlan had not caught him deftly, and let him curl into the open flap of his coat.

The night was balmy, though a trifle crisp, and Coghlan stood at the open door awhile, until presently 'Liza tripped down the stairs, after which time began to run a race at a quite ridiculous speed, and the great gong apparently went mad.

"I'll have to be after going," he said at last; "but look here, my girl, will I put my name down for 'indulgence'? There's always a lot of men wanting to be married 'with leave,' an' be jabbers! it's myself is among the lot! Hoots, toots! just look at the thing fair now, an' commune wid yerself over it—not forgettin' you'd see the other two craturs an' little Abednego all day an' ivery day—an' what more can I say than that, acushla?"

What, indeed! Surely the prospect was enough to dazzle any girl's eyes!

Drummer Coghlan was in a state of high glee. They had laughed at him at the canteen four years ago over his disastrous affair with the Corporal's widow; but he'd have the laugh on his side this time, anyway, for there wasn't a neater, sweeter, more respectable girl in all Cork City than little Missy's good Eliza. She'd make a lovely wife entoiirely.

Here Jim pulled out a shilling from his pocket, looked at it, and slipped it back again. Then his soul bubbled over in song:

"I'm keepin' them all for 'Liza,  
I'm keeping them every one;  
I'm keeping them all for 'Liza,  
And we shall have lots of fun.

What's that?"

Drummer Coghlan was passing by the little corner, the crafty little corner where the shadow fell so thick in spite of all the moon could do, and "that" was a sound like a cat scratching in a drain—scratching stealthily, too, as if afraid of being heard.

Coghlan came to a full stop. He might have been a wooden soldier for any stir there was out of him. The scratching went on, and then a dark figure crouched in an angle of the wall where it leaned up against the hospital, and dropped.

"Harry Deacon, an' you in your stock-in' feet!" hissed Coghlan, with an oath; and there stood Norah's lover, a white-faced, trembling creature, his boots slung round his neck by a string, his eyes staring and bloodshot. If any ghastly memory of that scene in the big square on a day when the summer was young, and the triangles braced for use, came into the minds of the two men thus face to face in an awful moment, be sure no word was spoken; only Deacon shrank back, till he stood against the wall, holding up his hands as if in dumb appeal.

"Tell me this," said Coghlan at length, drawing his breath deep as he spoke: "are ye a Fenian, a traitor to our lady the Queen, an' a disgrace to the coat on yer back? or have ye been out on the drink an' missed post? Tell me the truth, or I'll shake the sowl out o' yer body."

"I've bin—on the drink," panted Deacon, yet did not speak like a drunken man.

"Where will ye be if I report ye to the guard, you drivelling fool, eh?"

"Don't do that, Coghlan; don't do that," said the other, his dark eyes wild and gleaming like those of a hunted animal. Then, with a deep, muttered curse, he shrank back behind his companion as a tall, swinging figure came out into the moonlight from the direction of the hospital.

"How did he come here? Is he a devil with two shapes?" whispered Deacon, still shrinking back.

"Divil!" snapped Coghlan. "What divil?"

"The Adjutant—the Adjutant."

"When it comes to not knowing a Sergeant's uniform from an officer's mufti, your case is bad, my lad. You're not far off the blue horrors in my opinion, Private

Deacon; an' we'll see you wi' a shaven crown before long, and wid no sinse in ye to spake of. Be off home wid ye, an' make no more ado. It's riskin' me stroipes for ye I am, Deacon; an' only for the sake o' the poor gurl Norah an' her purty face I'd not be after doin' it at all at all. But don't go staring that way at Colour-Sergeant number one company and callin' him Adjutant and such like, or they'll be giving ye up for a first-class Government lunatic, be jabers, an' lettin' ye have free maintenance for nothing all the rest o' yer days."

Meanwhile, in one swift glance, Gentleman Jack had seen and taken in the position; seen, and passed on. It is only those who know their soldier-world who can gauge what this action on the part of a non-commissioned officer meant. Undetected, a slur upon his own conscience, a something to bring the red blood rushing to his brow; found out, loss of rank, disgrace, and shame.

He muttered as he walked: "Again, again, poor lad, he has been caught and trapped; and I—what have I done? . . . Given my honour away, played the traitor, . . ."

The sweat stood upon his brow; his dark eyes were full of pain.

"Am I mad," he said, "that her eyes haunt me like this—that her voice is ever in my ears? 'For Norah's sake,' that was what she said to Harry as I passed. I heard her—'for Norah's sake.' Ah, the dear heart! but what am I that I should think of you like this, my gentle lady? You are far above me, as the stars that shine there in the far-off blue. Still, to spare you pain, I have given my honour—my honour. . . ."

## THE OLD ROAD TO TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

JUST seventy years ago, the date 1823, we have it in the culprit's own confessions, a small boy from Charterhouse, at seven o'clock one beautiful August morning, was to be seen awaiting the drawing up of the stage-coach for Tunbridge Wells at the sign of the "Bolt in Tun," in Fleet Street. There is still a "Bolt in Tun" in Fleet Street, though stage-coaches depart from it never more, and you would seek there in vain the measure of early purl, or the beaker of rum and milk, such as started the early traveller of those days on his way with

roseate visions. Not that our Charterhouse youth was thus early depraved; he had the honest appetite of his age, he was breakfastless, and he had spent all his pocket-money, but he was in possession of a certain sum entrusted to him to deliver to his respected parent. The voice of hunger prevailed over the voice of an oversensitive conscience. He breakfasted on coffee and hot buttered toast, broke into the trust money to pay the score, and went on from one thing to another, till in later life he came to write "Vanity Fair," "Esmond," and, declining greatly, "The Virginians." The last, however, is most to our purpose, for perhaps the freshest and best of its pages show how Harry the headstrong began his career of pleasure at Tunbridge Wells.

But here is the coach at hand with its prancing tits, the swell coachman on the box with shiny hat; the fable may be narrated as well of '93 as of '23, only in these days the coach gives us time for our breakfast, and apologises for starting so early as ten-fifteen a.m. from Charing Cross, on the score of the distance to go and get back in time for dinner. And the guard sings out "All right!" and the stable-boys snatch the sheets from the horses' quarters, and away goes the coach. Is it over London Bridge among the dim little shops of '23, where the yawning shop-boys are taking down the shutters, past the Marshalsea with its prisoners, and the King's Bench, where raffish-looking captives wave a salute from the grated windows; where the country carts are coming in, with post-chaises, and the early mail with its winding horn? There is a turnpike by the "Elephant and Castle," and soon appear the hedgerows and the wispy trees, that suggest perhaps the tufted palms of the desert and the tinkling music of the "Caliph of Bagdad."

Or shall it be over Westminster Bridge in '93, with the roar of traffic in the ears, and the jingling of the tram-car bells, drays and waggons rumbling, and costermongers bawling over their wares in the roadside markets. All is London still, noisy, brisk, and cheerful, till Lewisham is reached with its long high street stretching along the Tunbridge road. And Lewisham holds out hands to Bromley with hardly a break in the ranks of houses and villas. It is all High Street, London; but how pleasant after all with bright parterres of flowers all along, with shrubs and lawns and gravel drives all in the extreme of neatness and

propriety ! It is Amazonia, too ; all the men are away picking up gold and silver in the City. There is hardly a young fellow left to play tennis with the girls, and a hush is over everything, broken only by the tinkle of Maud's piano, or the baying of Nero in the paddock.

On the right lies Hayes, where in the big house by the church lived the great Lord Chatham, and where the still more renowned William Pitt, his second son, was born. Farnborough comes next, hardly notable for anything except that its church was blown down in a high wind in 1639, and was replaced soon after by the present edifice. A little to the south, in a pleasant secluded nook, is the house where Dr. Darwin lived and carried on his profound biological experiments. Here is all health and wealth, with pleasant country scenes along the way. But in 1823 the road must have been somewhat lonely, and the coachman or guard might here have entertained the passengers with stories of the highwaymen of former days, to whose haunts we are now approaching.

For here the country assumes a wild and broken aspect, with glimpses every now and then of summits crowned with groups of trees, and of wide, indefinite prospects opening out. The highest summit, at some distance from the road, is known as Knockholt Beeches, and commands the vast wooded plain that lies to the south, another part of that vast forest of Anderida that we have before encountered in making our way to the coast. There is a sort of gloom and mystery about the ravine into which we make an abrupt descent, that recalls the Spanish sierras ; and there is a kind of appropriateness in learning that once the road was haunted by a bold highwayman who was known to the world at large as Spanish Jack. In his own country he bore the sonorous title of Bli Gonzalez de Granez, and was born at Alicante, of reputable if not noble parents. But taking to evil courses, he escaped the algeuzils of his native land by taking service on a British man-of-war. After serving some time in the navy, and forming an acquaintance with some "pressed" men from the Sussex coast, Jack took the opportunity of joining a strong band of smugglers who had their head-quarters at Hawkhurst, on the borders of Kent and Sussex, and who carried on their traffic in tea, tobacco, spirits, and foreign silks and lace, almost without concealment. In this way he became acquainted with the chief

highways in Kent and Sussex, and doubtless, with a train of pack-horses, had often passed through the defile before us, with a sharp look-out for revenue men, who rarely ventured, however, directly to oppose the march of such well-armed and determined desperadoes. But after a time Jack wearied of this too regular life, and began to operate on his own account as a highwayman, riding a good horse with sailor-like recklessness, and eluding capture by the celerity of his movements. Still he was caught at last, and executed in 1756.

A contemporary of Jack's was William Page, who was dreaded by the fine people who in coach or on horseback made their way to the fashionable Wells. "You will ride with us to Tonbridge, nephew Warrington, and keep us from the highwaymen," quoth the Baroness Bernstein, who for her further protection had a couple of men-servants with pistols and blunderbusses mounted on the box of her carriage. Page's method was original and ingenious. He turned out in his own phaeton and pair, fashionably dressed, and with the air of a man of "ton," took the road to the Wells, or some other fashionable resort, and at some convenient by-way turned off, altered his dress, put on a black cut or grizzled wig, saddled and mounted one of the phaeton horses, and pistol in hand rode off. Then it was "your money or your life" at some carriage door, with the inmates of which, perhaps, just previously the highwayman had exchanged polite salutations. The women shrieked, the men swore, but all handed out their purses, for it was known that the highwayman's challenge was no empty formula. Then back to his carriage, and presently, perhaps, overtaking his late victims, William vows that he has been stopped by the same scoundrelly highwayman, and urges pursuit on the tardy patrol. Then to dance that evening at the Wells, in the best of company, or returning to town, to the masquerade at Madame Cornelys' in Soho Square. But this fondness for good company was William's ruin, for after the masquerade one night a pretended Countess robbed him of five hundred pounds, and in his rage he made a vow that henceforth he would only rob women. But as ladies with fat purses were not too plentiful, he soon had to abandon this course. Still frequenting the masquerades, the fine gentlemen gamblers he met stripped him of all his winnings ; so that, becoming reckless, he was captured and hanged at Maidstone, A.D. 1758, and his carcass hung up by the

roadside for the comfort of the fine people who passed on their way to and from the Wells. What a story he might have written of the "Adventures of a Phaeton"!

These cheerful stories carry us down into the formidable ravine, which proves to be no other than the charming little nook of Riverhead, with Madam's Court Hill, "of bygone celebrity for highway robberies and coach accidents," and perhaps not altogether a delight to cyclists of the present day. For it is something of a climb to the level of the plateau on which stands Sevenoaks, that cheerful and thriving little town, which owed its original importance, and, indeed, its existence, to the great highway on which it is aligned. For it is not only as the way to Tunbridge and the Wells, but as the ancient route to Rye, that the road is of importance—Rye that in Elizabeth's days was the great port of communication between Protestant England and the Huguenots of France; Rye where Elizabeth herself often watched the embarkation of her soldiers, destined for the aid of the good cause, and where her ally, the "great" Henry, once proposed to visit her from the opposite shore for the pleasure of kissing her hand; Rye that is still the metropolis of the Marsh, and the once great citadel of smuggling.

It is impossible to leave Sevenoaks without a visit to Knole Park, with its grand groups of noble beeches and its time-honoured mansion. There is interest enough about Knole to occupy a long summer's day, for the house, originally built as a palace for the Archbishops of Canterbury, shows samples of every architectural device from the sixteenth century down to our own; and, as the home of the Sackvilles for the greater part of that time, has been stored with curios of all kinds and art treasures in abundance; and as an example of a grand mansion of the seventeenth century—with much of its original furniture in situ, its ponderous state beds, once gorgeous with cloth of gold and splendid devices, its hangings and tapestries, its galleries, ball-rooms, drawing-rooms, halls, and innumerable staircases—is a thing hardly to be matched anywhere, at home or abroad.

In leaving Sevenoaks, you get a splendid prospect as the road descends in a maze of unexampled richness and beauty, and a turn reveals the vast plain of the Weald, with the wooded heights that rise between us and the dim aerial downs

that bound the distance. But when we bottom the descent we feel that we have come into a different region. A drowsier land it is, this of the Kentish Weald, and the air with us, as with old Lambarde, "seemeth somewhat thicke," a rich, languid air that tends to reverie and general indolence; and of this somnolent region Tunbridge is the capital, with its tufted Castle hill, and the soft Medway flowing beneath in many languid channels, and a rich, malty, nappy flavour in the air. Yet the boys seem alive enough as they come whooping out of the gates of the old grammar school, while rooks are cawing overhead, and the steam-pipe of some neighbouring brewery gives forth a monotonous hum. Many people would like to see the Castle, but it is kept secluded as a "bonne bouche" for the Archaeological Society, which visits it every five years or so, and listens to learned papers thereon. But there is not much left after all of the grand old Castle that held out against the Red King and his English levies—just a fine thirteenth-century gateway, and some broken walls of the keep, about which it is hardly worth while to disturb the repose of a quiet English household. There is not as much to be seen of the mother Castle of Brionne in the pleasant valley of the Rille in Normandy, for which Richard de Clare obtained it from the Crown in a pleasant primitive method of exchange. A rope was run round the Lowy or League of Brionne, which was the special domain of the Castle, and as much measured off round the tufted hill above the Medway. But this method of dispensing with scribes and parchments can hardly be quoted as a happy precedent, for with their Castle the De Clares came in for a troublesome dispute with the see of Canterbury, which claimed the lordship of town and Castle, and for such a potentate the rope's end was not an available argument. The later history of the Castle connects it with the Staffords, who made it an occasional residence; first that Duke of Buckingham who fell in the Wars of the Roses, A.D. 1549, and then that unlucky grandson whose head was "off'd" by Richard Crookback, and the no more fortunate son of his "poor Humphry Bohun," decapitated by Henry the Eighth; all these may have entered in state beneath the heavy-browed arch of the old Castlegate.

When Tunbridge is passed there is nothing to attract attention but the pleasant country highway among farms,



cottages, snug county mansions, hop-gardens, parks, and chases, till you reach Southborough, with its church picturesquely placed on a breezy common. And here it was that the first visitors to the Wells, after their waters had become famous, pitched their tents, or had their lodgings in the cottages that presently were built, "little clean and convenient habitations," writes Count Hamilton, "that lie straggling a mile and a half round the Wells."

With the town itself in sight, there is little more to be said about the road. But if unhampered by the exigencies of coach and horses, there is another way to the Wells from Sevenoaks, more interesting, perhaps, although a little longer, and not such easy going. It is through a country well wooded and rather wild, and the road passes through Watts's Cross, where there are a few houses, but no traditions as to who Watts may have been, or where the Cross comes in, whether in commemoration of his murder, or only of his overzealousness of the parish. And there is Stocks Green, which speaks for itself as a warning to vagrants; and then we come to Penshurst with its snug inn and pretty village, and the church hemmed in by ancient timbered houses, under which is the gateway to the shaded churchyard. The fine old baronial mansion of Penshurst Place is open to the visitor at stated hours; with its hall of the fourteenth century, showing the "louvre" in the roof by which the smoke escaped from the central fire of logs. The minstrels' gallery is there over the screens which conceal the entrances to the butteries and kitchens, and, indeed, all the arrangements of the old feudal mansion may be studied here. The main building is of a fine Tudor character like the Sidneys themselves, who were but plain country gentry till Sir William, who fought at Flodden, raised the family to distinction. Then they came to be Earls of Leicester, and gave their name to Leicester Square; but their chief claim to posthumous honour after all is in their brave sons and fair daughters—Sir Philip, the poet and gallant soldier; "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother;" sweet Saccharissa, Waller's flame; and Algernon, the martyr for the "good old cause."

And we may visit Sidney's oak, which is shown near the pond called Lanarp Well, without feeling strong conviction of its really being

That taller tree, which of a nut was set  
At his great birth, where all the muses met,

and the same of which Waller sings as he declares his love for Saccharissa:

Go, boy, and carve this passion on the bark  
Of yonder tree which stands the sacred mark  
Of noble Sidney's birth.

Still, an oak planted at Philip Sidney's birth would be in full vigour at this time; though from Ben Jonson's allusion to a nut—which an acorn is not—and Waller's injunctions to the boy, which in the case of an oak would involve the destruction of a good many pocket-knives, one would be inclined to guess that the original tree was a beech.

After Penshurst there is one more village to pass, Speldhurst, which is like any other Kentish village, and then you reach the Wells, through an environment of new houses and villas. But after all, which is not often the case, the entrance to the Wells which most impresses the imagination is from the railway station. For you arrive in a cutting, bringing with you the "thicke" air of the Weald mixed up with smoke and steam, and from this subterranean nook you mount higher and higher like Jack on his Beanstalk, and then come out upon a region so utterly different from that you have quitted, that everything appears bright and exhilarating. The air is so sweet and delicate, the ways of the place so quiet and easy; the rustle of the leaves in the shaded Pantiles seems to bring the whole eighteenth century back again—the fine gentlemen in cocked hats and perukes, the painted, patched, and powdered dames, the fresh country lasses with their baskets of eggs and butter.

The spring still bubbles forth, but unnoticed, in its granite basin, but there are no dippers there to claim the welcome penny from the new arrival. Yet it is said that in the morning early visionary figures may be seen wending their way to the well, the fiddles are heard in a slender thread of harmony, the doctor with his silk small-clothes and gold-headed cane parades solemnly among the visitors, and the parson in wig and gown exchanges smiling salutes with the ladies.

In the days of the Merry Monarch the Wells were gay enough, and a good observer and judge of manners, the Count Hamilton, in his memoirs of Grammont describes it as "the place of all Europe the most rural and simple, and yet at the same time the most entertaining and agreeable. Everything there breathes mirth and pleasure." He describes the Pantiles as a long walk shaded by spreading trees,

with shops plentifully stocked, "where there is raffing as in the Foire de St. Germaine." He is taken, too, with the young, fair, fresh-coloured country girls, with clean linen, straw hats, and neat shoes and stockings, who sell game and vegetables, flowers and fruit. But with this fair, rural background what a jumble of queer figures in front! The Queen is there, but is hardly a check upon the wild pranks of the courtiers. Buckingham is there,

That life of pleasure and that soul of whim,

and in his most frolicsome humour, that spared nothing human or divine from which he could extract a laugh; and merry Nell is there with the players, as a foil to whom the tall, dry, hard-favoured Prince Rupert is the unconscious butt of the sardonic laughter of the crowd. Beautiful Miss Hamilton is there, too, with her friend, the fair Mrs. Wetenhall, and Lady Muskerrey, about whom Buckingham exploded in "*feux de joie*" of jokes. And the "belle Stuart" was of the party, whose beauty of form is preserved for us in the Britannia of the halfpence, but who was as wild as the rest, if not as wicked.

But if there was mirth and music and feasting among the Assyrians, the tents of Israel were pitched not so far off. Indeed, there has always been a strong Puritan element about the Wells, and on the adjoining heights of Rasthall gathered a number of solid, wealthy citizens, their handsome wives and fair daughters, with a sprinkling of favoured divines, for prayer and exposition. Among these last was Dr. Annealey, an ejected minister, with a bevy of lovely daughters, one of whom, the youngest, became the wife of the Vicar of Epworth and the mother of John Wesley.

Another generation succeeds the roysterers and saints, the sons of Belial and the children of grace. All is decorous now, and a little formal. Your pleasures are set before you in a regular schedule with a list of prices. On the first morning after arrival you are early saluted by the music. For this civility you have to pay half-a-crown or more. Then you must proceed in a suitable undress to the public walk, drink and pay the dippers. After that enter yourself at the assembly room, at the coffee-house, at the bookseller's, dropping a crown for yourself and each of your honour's family at each place. The music will be after you once more, and they expect half-a-

guinea. After that to the tea-rooms, where breakfast is served; in fine weather under the trees. If your worship on arrival is inclined to treat the whole company, that will not be taken amiss. Breakfast over, it is "*de rigueur*" that you go to prayers, and that you stay to salute the parson, and peruse his book of subscriptions.

After prayers, with what zest do the fiddles strike up, while the whole company turn out upon the walks! And then what gossip, what scandals, what shopping, what raffing, with a little quiet gambling for those inclined, or morning whist for the more sedate! At two you dine, and then when it suits you turn out in full dress for the music, tea-drinking, cards, conversation, and lawful gaming. Then there are public balls twice a week, at half-a-crown and a shilling, where the M.C. imposes upon you two successive partners for the minuet, while the rest look on and criticise your capers. At eight the country dances begin, the ladies ranged according to the table of precedence; tea is served at nine, and chairs, calashes, and clogs at eleven. With all this you have concerts, lectures, races, and love and gallantry thrown in ad lib.

And for company, have we not had the best in the land? Good Queen Anne, who paved our walks; later Prince Fred, with the amiable mother of infant George, Amelia and Cumberland to follow; and in due course the Royal brothers York and Gloucester, who were saluted with fireworks and a general illumination. Then we had Apollo, if you please, otherwise the King's famous Capellmeister, Mr. Handel. As for the peerage, to name them would exhaust the Red Book. The famous Dr. Johnson and his Scotch friend, the illustrious author of "*Clarissa*," the humorous Mr. Fielding—oh, we have had all the wits and all the fine gentlemen, too, I assure you. Beau Nash arranged our code of etiquette, Chesterfield approved our moral code.

And if all these glories are past, and the Wells no longer attract the fashionable crowd, so are they also unhaunted by crowds of trippers; no music-hall songs are yelled along its pleasant, cheerful streets. But what pretty girls you see, what families of charming children! Kent still sends her fair daughters to the Paris of the Weald. Good hop-growers make their pile and buy houses at the Wells; cultivators of cob-nuts and strawberries, as

they grow rich, take up their abode there. And what breezy commons there are, and what rocks! You might not think much of them in Wales, but in Kent they are marvellous. And what an altogether refreshing place it is, with rest for the weary and vigour for the jaded, and peace and comfort to all within its ample circumference. And if its waters are out of fashion, there is always its delicious air, that none of the winds that blow in other places have quite the secret of.

#### REGRET.

Low is the stream,  
The swifts fly low;  
A curtain of cloud is over the sky,  
And the thrushes, that sang so blithesomely,  
In the ready coverts come and go,  
Chanting in fragments fitfully  
A dolorous understrain of woe.  
The millpool frowns with an angry gleam  
And a menace of death in the depth below,  
Cold shivers of deathly anguish pass  
Through the long lean leaves of the river grass,  
As over the water the distant chime  
Of the tolling death-bell beats in time  
To my sad heart mazed in a mist-like dream  
Of the dear dead days of years ago—  
By the low-banked stream  
Where the swifts fly low.

#### A SELF-MADE MARTYR.

##### A COMPLETE STORY.

"SHE won't have me, aunt," said my nephew, Fred Marchant.

I knew that. Had it been otherwise, Fred would not have come in so soon and so disconsolate.

"Why?" I asked.

"Am I a bill, that she is bound to give reasons for rejecting me?" returned Fred bitterly. "She doesn't love me, I suppose. I think I'll go into the garden and smoke it over."

I am a woman, but I am also a widow. His tone told me that it was advisable to let him have the last word.

"Do, dear," I said, "and take one of my poor Walter's cigars. It will perhaps soothe you better than your pipe."

Fred had been down to the Vicarage, ostensibly to play lawn-tennis; really, as I guessed before he started, to ask the Vicar's daughter the question which had been on the tip of his tongue for the last fortnight, and I was surprised at the answer she had given him.

I don't pretend that I liked Amy even then; but I thought I understood her, and I had never credited her with any special aptitude for flirtation. She had

certainly encouraged Fred, though—openly when first she knew him, and lately in a tantalising way so eminently calculated to effect its apparent purpose, that it would have been inexcusable in any girl who had a mother to help her; but Mr. Willis was a widower, and one must make allowances.

Unless, then, she was a flirt of the most dangerous class—and I could not think that; poor Amy is too emotional (tender-hearted, Fred calls it) to play the part with success—what did she mean by her inconsistent conduct? Fred was four-and-twenty. He has, luckily for him, nine hundred a year independent of his profession; he has been called to the bar, but seems to enjoy unlimited leisure, some part of which he pretends to devote to the pursuit of literary fame. He is handsome and good-tempered. What more could the daughter of a poor country Vicar expect? She did not, I was sure, dislike him. In short, I was puzzled, and I made up my mind to get to the bottom of the mystery.

To solve mysteries one must have some facts to work upon, and there are rejections and rejections. I had not the least idea what sort of a rejection Fred's had been, so when he came in to supper I set to work to find out.

"Fred," I said, "which do you think would suit me best, Malvern, Cheltenham, or Harrogate? To live in, I mean?"

Fred was fond of going about the country on a bicycle—to study character and pick up bits of local colour, he used to say—and he liked one to assume that he was a sort of animated guide-book.

"Well," he replied, "the air of Malvern isn't bad, but you won't like the hills. It's all up and down. Cheltenham would be much too warm for you in the summer, and as for Harrogate—but why do you ask? You surely don't think of leaving Westerby? I thought you liked the—the church and all that, you know, so much."

The hasty substitution of church for another word was obvious, but I did not resent it. I believe the poor boy was afraid of making me blush.

"Certainly; I like both the Church and the Vicar," I replied, partly to put him at his ease, and partly to let him know how easily I could read him. "I was thinking of you. After this you won't care to come here often; at least, not while Amy Willis remains unmarried."

"But, aunt," he cried, "I haven't abandoned hope. I smoked it well over—really those cigars of poor Uncle Walter's do cheer a fellow up wonderfully—and I determined to have another try. Not now, of course, but perhaps at Christmas. I don't think there's any one else, because she said she should never marry; but never's a long time, isn't it? Don't you go and deprive Westerby of the light of your gracious presence on my account, I beg."

My mystery was half solved already. The girl who tempers her coldness to her lover by telling him that other men must also sigh in vain, is assuredly possessed of the spirit of self-sacrifice. It only remained to discover on what particular altar Amy meant to immolate herself.

"Does she want to become a trained nurse, Fred?" I asked.

"Not that I know of," said Fred, apparently surprised at my question.

"Or to join the Zenana mission?" I went on.

"I don't think so," said Fred. "But, by Jove! aunt, I believe you are on the right track. Perhaps I spoke rather hastily just now. I was too much out of it at first to think clearly, but, hang it all, I can't believe she doesn't care for me. Why, only the other day she——"

I spare the reader the long catalogue of trifling favours accorded to my nephew, on divers occasions, by the object of his affections which he inflicted upon me. I was sure she loved him before he began—but men never seem to understand that there is no need to prove a thing one already believes, and I did not interrupt him.

"No. It isn't hospital work and it isn't Zenana," he went on, when he had finished strengthening his failing faith. "But I'll tell you what it is, aunt. It's her father."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

The dear Vicar was one of the most sensible men I ever met, and I could not believe that he objected to what was a most excellent match for a very ordinary girl.

"Why, she thinks it is her duty to stay with him—be the comfort of his declining years, and so on," replied Fred.

"What nonsense!" I exclaimed.

Mr. Willis was in the prime of life, and looked so much younger than his years, that no one would have imagined he had a daughter who was nearly of age. He reminded me in many respects of my poor Walter. That is, if the late Mr. Parminter had been a clergyman—he was a wine

merchant—and had been spared, I think he would have mellowed into just such a man; but if I had been taken and had left Mr. Parminter with an only daughter, I hope he would not have been afraid of her.

It was the Vicar's one fault. He was not master of his own household. Amy was—nay, is—of a very jealous disposition, and even in the early days of our intercourse she grudged her father the consolations of my friendship. Lately the Vicar's feelings towards me had ceased to be merely fraternal, and the poor man's struggles to conceal the change in them had been pitiful to see—but I fear I am stretching the thread of my conversation with my nephew to breaking point. Let me resume it ere it snaps.

"I don't see where the nonsense comes in," said Fred, almost sulkily. "The Vicar is getting old, and it's just the sort of noble, unselfish conduct one might expect from a girl like Amy. But I'll tell you what I'll do, aunt. Go away to-morrow for a month's tour—I can't write while this is on my mind—and then I'll try my luck again. I wonder if you will help me?"

"What do you want me to do?" I asked. I didn't feel at all sure that helping the boy would be any real kindness to him. I was not anxious for him to marry Amy—but then there was the dear Vicar to consider. Once freed from his daughter's tyranny my heart told me he would soon speak, but as I did not yet know what answer I would give him, I thought it safest not to commit myself.

"Well," said Fred, with some confusion of manner, "you could sound her, you know, and if you find it's all right you might hint that I shouldn't want her to leave Westerby. As my wife she could see nearly as much of her father, and keep quite as keen an eye on the parish work, as she does now."

"So she could," said I, concealing my amusement at his simplicity in supposing that Amy's enthusiasm for parish work would survive marriage. "But come, Fred, be candid. Wouldn't you like me to marry the Vicar myself, and so relieve Amy of the necessity of mounting guard over him?"

"By Jove, aunt!" he cried. "You ought to have been a thought-reader. How did you guess I was half wishing you would?"

"Why half, Fred?" I asked.

"Well," he explained, stammering and blushing, "you like him, I know, as a friend and—and a Vicar—but I don't think

he's the sort of man to make you happy as a husband."

The ideal husband a father would choose for his daughter, a brother for his sister, or even a nephew for his aunt, is as yet unborn and likely to remain so. Even if I had been quite convinced myself of the Vicar's ability to console me for my loss, I knew that Fred was as much prejudiced against the father as he was infatuated with the daughter, so I did not argue the point, but assured him that I would not dream of endangering my happiness for his convenience, and promised that, if circumstances threw in my way a chance to advance his interests, I would not neglect to avail myself of it.

What were his interests, though? Amy was a fussy, sanguine girl, much too fond of her own way to make a man happy for long. Her father had only been Vicar of Westerby about a year, and in that time she had turned the parish upside down with her fads. She had made the work in the Sunday-school so hard with her system of marks and prizes—which aroused a most unhealthy spirit of emulation in the children—and her strictness about attention and attendance, that I had resigned my class. As for the mothers' meeting—well, I can't go into details in a story meant for general reading, but the medical lore she displayed in the advice she had the impudence to give those women about the rearing of children was positively startling. In short, she wasn't at all the wife I would have chosen for any one who valued a quiet life, but what was the use of trying to persuade Fred that my knowledge of her was to his as a well to a puddle?

He saw that she had reddish hair, but no; he didn't even see that, he called it bright chestnut; bluish-grey eyes, which she knew how to use, on him; a pink-and-white complexion; a ready blush, except at mothers' meeting; an animated though self-conscious manner—I am wrong again, he had failed to detect the self-consciousness; and a passably pretty face. Out of these commonplace facts he had built up an astounding piece of fiction, which I dare say he honestly believed to be but an incomplete inventory of Amy's mental and bodily charms.

Was it to his interest to let him marry her and discover the truth? I thought not, but as I felt sure that, whatever I might do, she would take him as soon as she was tired of playing the martyr, and also realised that there were at least two people

in the world besides this pair of silly lovers, I resolved to act, if the opportunity for action came to me, solely on behalf of those other two, that is to say, the dear Vicar and myself.

Something soon happened which not only strengthened my resolve but gave me a chance to put it into practice. Amy grossly, though perhaps unintentionally, insulted me at the mothers' meeting. There was a poor woman there who was nursing twins, and as she was going away I gave her some good advice.

"You should take plenty of stout, Mrs. Jenkins," I said. "The best brown, mind. A quart a day would not be a drop too much."

"Thank you kindly, mum," said Mrs. Jenkins, dropping a curtsy. "But how be I to get it?"

"Why, by going to the 'Blue Boar,' I should think!" I replied—really the stupidity of agricultural labourers' wives is something beyond belief—and I was just about to tell her she must make sure she wasn't imposed upon, by examining the labels on the bottles, when Amy interrupted me.

"Mrs. Jenkins," she said, "be sure you call at the Vicarage for that mutton-broth I promised you. And be quick, because cook is going out."

The woman dropped another curtsy and left the room before I had time to begin again. Then Amy turned to me.

"Oh, Mrs. Parminster!" said she, looking reproachfully at me. "I am so sorry you advised that poor thing to take stout! She needs every penny she has for food."

"Well, my dear," I replied, with a pleasant smile—I always did my best to be civil to the girl—"what better food could she buy?"

"But, Mrs. Parminster," said she, also with a smile, but it was a superior one, and by no means pleasant, "alcohol is not food, and all the best authorities"—she quoted half-a-dozen names I never heard of—"discourage the use of stimulants in such cases. A mother needs nourishment, and—"

My temper is naturally placid, but I couldn't stand there and be lectured by a girl, especially on such a subject.

"Thank you, Miss Willis," I interrupted her, "I know perfectly well what a mother needs. I have been one myself. There I have the advantage of you—at least, I suppose so."

So anxious was I to avoid quarrelling

with Amy, if only for her father's sake, that I left the room immediately after making this remark, and walked home by myself. The minx had quite upset me, and I felt that I could not trust myself to speak to her again. Authorities, indeed! When my little Willie was born, old Dr. Doddrell, who was an authority if you like, advised me to take a light tawny port as well as stout, and poor Mr. Parminter ransacked the vaults at the docks to find one to suit me. He and the good doctor went on a tasting expedition every day for a week before they laid their hands on the exact brand for my constitution—but there, I have not space to indulge in reminiscences, however interesting.

Would you believe that Amy went home in tears, and told her father that I had been very rude to her? She did, though, and there is no knowing what mischief she might have caused if the Vicar had not, like the dear, fair-minded man that he is, come up in the evening to hear my version of the affair. I had quite recovered my equanimity over a cup of tea, and out of pity for him I suppressed the details of the quarrel—if quarrel it could be called—and said that I was quite willing to forgive and forget, if only Amy would promise never again to parade her testotalism in my presence.

"You see, Mr. Willis," I concluded, "as a woman with something like ten thousand pounds in brewery shares, I can't be expected to stand that. By the way, will you have a glass of wine?"

"You dear, good-hearted soul," said he, "I will."

The warmth of his tone startled me. Could he have made up his mind?

A glance at his face convinced me that he had. His eyes shone with the most ardent admiration. I lowered mine, and, to cover my confusion, rose to pour out the wine. My hand shook, and some was spilt on the cloth. The Vicar sprang to my side and began to mop up the drops with his handkerchief. Simultaneously I did the same with mine. Somehow our fingers became intertwined, and before I could realise what was happening, his arm was round my waist and his lips were pressed to mine.

I made no attempt to repulse him. Instinctively I felt he had done the right thing in a most satisfactory way. To tell the truth, a good deal of the hesitation I had felt about accepting him, if ever he should summon up courage to propose,

had sprung from my fear that he would ask me to be a mother to Amy.

During the years of my widowhood several men had proposed to me, and they had all mentioned their motherless children, except one who was a bachelor, and spoilt his chance by expressing doubts of his ability to compensate me for the loss of Mr. Parminter. I was, therefore, agreeably surprised by the Vicar's method of declaring himself, though after all I need not have been. My first husband, as I have said, was just such another man, and he too took my heart by storm in a very similar way.

I knew of course that, as Mrs. Willis, it would be my duty to assume the responsibilities of the first holder of the title, but sentiment, I think, demands that on such an occasion previous contracts on either side should be for the moment ignored.

Unfortunately, their consequences cannot be ignored for more than the moment. We sat in bliss for an hour, and then I felt it was time to face the difficulties, or rather the one difficulty, in our path.

The Vicar, emboldened by his success, had been urging me to name an early day. I had not the least objection to do so, but I resented the frequent allusions to our time of life with which he sought to strengthen his pleadings.

"But, Henry," said I, interrupting a totally unnecessary appeal to my common sense, "what about Amy?"

"Bless me!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten her."

My heart positively fluttered with delight, and I would have rewarded this proof of the absorbing nature of his affection with—well, in the usual way, if the love-light in his eyes had not instantly begun to fade.

"Surely you are not afraid of her?" I asked, in a tone calculated to arouse his manliness.

"Well, no, my dear. Of course not," he replied, and I am sorry to say his looks belied his words. "But as I hardly dared to hope you would ever deign to smile upon me, I never thought it worth while to risk upsetting her by confiding my—er—feelings to her. Really, if you don't mind—where ignorance is bliss, you know—I beg your pardon, my love, of course I don't mean that exactly. I have no doubt, dear, Amy will very soon learn to appreciate you; but don't you think it would be better to be able to tell her that

we are married, instead of letting her know that we intend to be!"

I was not prepared for such a suggestion, and I spoke rather sharply to poor Henry, but he stuck to his point with an obstinacy for which I was not prepared, and at last I determined to let him have his way.

"Very well, dear," said I, "it shall be as you wish; but as a secret engagement is always liable to misconstruction, the sooner ours comes to an end the better."

What idiots even the best of men are! He thought I wanted to break it off, and I had to tell him plainly that he must marry me that day month, or not at all, before he came to his senses.

I went to Torquay the next day, and we were married there at the time I had fixed, quite quietly, of course. Not until after the ceremony did we write to Fred and Amy, informing them of our union. How differently people are constituted! When Fred received his letter—on account of my absence from home he had prolonged his tour—he hurried back to Westerby by the first train, and found Amy nearly broken-hearted. At least, that is what he says.

He admits that, personally, he thought our letter—we wrote and signed it jointly—contained the best news he ever heard in his life, and yet he maintains that we ought to have had more consideration for Amy.

Consideration for Amy, indeed! Why, it was one of my motives for consenting to keep our engagement secret. I was sure she would object to it out of sheer jealousy, and I thought I would spare her a month's heart-burning. Moreover, she proved how little she deserved any consideration whatever by marrying Fred openly, in Westerby parish church, before all the assembled village, on the morning of the day we returned from our honeymoon.

Of course it was done out of spite, and I am sorry to say we were a good deal annoyed—for one thing, when we arrived the bells were dumb because the ringers were drunk—but the annoyance was only temporary, and was more than counter-balanced by the satisfaction I felt when I heard that Fred and Amy had decided to make their home in London. Just at first people seemed to have some idea that Amy had been badly treated by her father, but, as even the few enemies I had in the place were too full of curiosity not to call, I easily explained away that absurd notion.

Everybody whose opinion is worth anything says I was quite right not to humiliate myself by telling the Vicar of the state of affairs between Amy and Fred, or, in other words, trying to persuade him that his daughter would not, after all, be so very angry with him for dreaming of marrying again.

All my friends, moreover, think that the story of my second marriage ought to teach all young girls, but especially widowers' daughters, to make quite sure, before sacrificing themselves to filial affection, that the sacrifice is necessary; and, therefore, I make no apology for publishing it.

### ABOUT THE FLEMINGS.

THE tourist travelling over the network of railway lines between Ghent and Lille, and with no scruples to keep him from sitting side by side with the people—and especially the market-women—of the country in a third-class carriage, might well fancy he was in Holland, a good many miles to the north.

The physiognomy of his companions is distinctly Dutch. They are also of the conventional Dutch build, massive in the extreme without being positively ungainly, and they carry Dutch noses and Dutch double chins to their faces. If there is anything in the world more enjoyably farcical than an average Dutch countenance in repose, the writer does not know it. This adds to the piquancy of the experience in this Flemish third-class carriage.

Moreover, the language spoken is as nearly Dutch as it can be without being actually the tongue taught at Leyden; and the heavy gestures which accompany it are just those used by the Dutch burgher when in earnest argument. And lastly, the landscape is remarkable for its unvarying flatness, and the witness it bears to the indefatigable industry of the local cultivators: herein resembling the stereotyped Dutch landscape.

It is, in fact, the land of the Flemings, a people who deserve to be better known than they are outside their own somewhat restricted homeland.

There are an astonishing number of them to the square mile. The geography books teach us this; but the lesson is brought home much more emphatically from the window of a railway train. Yet half a millennium ago it is probable the

population here was even denser than it now is. Certainly it was so as far as the Flemish towns are concerned. It is enough to read the chronicles of Froissart to realise this, and to marvel at the fertility of the land in human beings.

Still, even now Flanders is remarkable in this respect. The hedgeless fields and hop-gardens, the patches of roots and tobacco plants teem with workers. Men, women, and children of both sexes are busy with the harvest, and they seem to have that desirable faculty of concentration which helps so strongly towards prosperity. What is it to them if the train passes through their midst? They do not lift their heads to stare at it. Even the hop-pickers—comfortably settled to their work upon chairs evidently built to sustain serious burdens—do not use this slight opportunity for momentary relaxation.

Dotted among the parti-coloured fields—with an emphatic tendency to be stiff-soled—are the red and white houses of the peasantry. They are cleanly and picturesque rather than obtrusive, although as a rule they stand nakedly upon the land, with no garnish of ornamental trees hugging their precincts. No unbecoming excrescence is allowed upon their walls, even as no useless weed or parasite is permitted to trespass upon the area consecrated to the support of the family. The very pig of the establishment must here behave himself, and keep his unhallowed impulses duly within bounds. For is he not a pig in an orderly land, where the maxim "Waste not, want not" is written in letters of gold upon the heart of each honest Fleming, as soon as he is able to read letters in intelligible conjunction?

The towns and villages of Flanders are alike interesting, though in a more forcible way than the country districts traversed by the railway. The former often possess churches much more grandiose than the size of the towns themselves seems to justify. Hardly are you across the frontier from France than the majestic towers of Poperinghen excite the traveller's admiration. One is fain to ask oneself: "Poperinghen, Poperinghen! What is the history of the place? Ought it perchance to be coupled with Cologne, and Rheims, and Strasburg; and is our British ignorance of it merely an error on the part of our insular geographers?" But other towns come into view one after the other, each with its stately places of worship; and

many of them bear names as unfamiliar to the stranger as Poperinghen.

This trait is really due to the decay of the towns themselves, rather than to local extravagance or enthusiasm in church-building. The churches were founded and raised centuries ago, when there were two or three times as many Flemings to the square mile as there are now. Ghent, for example, though still sufficiently famous, is nothing to what it was. Its railway station is assuming, and so are the residential houses near it; but both would besit the city as it was when the Dukes of Burgundy found it so sturdy an opponent, better than they besit it in our century—though, to be sure, it is a bold stroke of fancy to conceive the Ghent of 1400 or 1450 endowed with a railway.

Ypres is in the same case with Ghent. The towers of its churches rise above the houses with the grace and strength of cathedrals. There is something fascinating in the sound of these mediæval chimes prattling melodiously every hour above the heads of the business men and factory girls of the present. Five hundred years ago Ypres had two hundred thousand inhabitants. Barely a tenth as many now find a livelihood in its circuit.

Courtrai deserves to be coupled with Ypres. Its cathedral church of St. John should be seen, if only for the masterly modern frescoes which dignify its old walls, and the bright, many-coloured stucco work upon its altars. Courtrai is better off than Ypres, inasmuch as it has industries which keep its blood pulsing in its veins. Its large hotels contrast touchingly with the humble inns of Ypres, and if you chance to be in its streets at the dinner-hour you will see a surprising number of clean-faced work-girls, not all of whom wear the look of calm stolidity which one fancies is indigenous in Flanders.

In the villages one comes into vigorous acquaintance with the singular individuality of the rural Fleming. He is commonly a man with a very limited number of aspirations, and no very marked amount of native courtesy. At a venture, you would set him down as a boor unmitigated; especially if you had chanced to sit with him at his ease for a spell. One of his worst points is his habit of expectoration. I fancy he beats the average American in his recklessness in this particular. He treats the churches just as he treats the village pot-house or the railway carriage.

The women, though absurd in their un-



wildness, are more engaging than the men. This is not wonderful, since the same may be said of their sisters elsewhere. It is natural, moreover, that they should be more sympathetic.

I proved this latter point experimentally the other day at the hamlet called Godewaersvelde, which is nearly on the frontier between France and Belgium. I was deposited at this insignificant hamlet late at night, having been heartlessly deceived by divers trains; and was for a time doubtful if I should not be forced to beg the use of the waiting-room at the railway station for a bedchamber.

There is a certain great red monastery of a modern kind on a hill a mile and a half from the village, and thither I had designed to go for the night—having years back contracted a taste for monkish hospitality. But at so late an hour the idea was absurd. The station-master informed me in excellent French that the monks were all abed, and would not enjoy being aroused for so trivial a purpose. Besides, it was raining heavily, the night was black as coal, and the road is not at all a good one. It only remained, therefore, to seek accommodation somewhere, as the last train in either direction had departed.

This was the beginning of trouble, and even anxiety. The first three "estaminets" at which I applied declined to have anything to do with me. An "estaminet," by-the-bye, is not an inn, but a low sort of eating and drinking house. The average Belgian village has about half as many "estaminets" as houses. The hosts of these Godewaersvelde "estaminets" were, it may be, civil in repudiation of me, but the civility was not in the tone of their voices, and the rigmarole which accompanied their negatives was incomprehensible to me.

So half an hour passed. Then I reached a fourth "estaminet." I was given to understand that this was my last chance. It was to be here or nowhere. But here also it soon appeared that no room was vacant. The master of the house—he was a draper and much else besides—was sorry; and with this ineffectual regret he would have had me go about my business. There was a young man in the room whose sample cases proclaimed him a commercial traveller. He was amused at my predicament. He showed it by his unvarnished smiles, and the diverted way in which he stirred the sugar in the grog he was imbibing ere retiring to his bed.

I was vexed, because really I had had

enough of the Flemish rain and the Flemish mud, and besides, I could not open my mouth without yawning. And I proclaimed my vexation in the most barbarous French I could evolve from my brain, fancying that its very uncouthness might touch their hearts. Happily my adjectives reached the ears of the landlady of the house, an enormous, good-natured woman. She hurried into the room and cross-examined her husband, with her sympathetic eyes upon me. And it was due entirely to her and the complacency of the young bagman that I was lodged here after all. I shared the young bagman's room, which held two beds. We spent about two minutes in mutual courteous objections to the better bed of the two, which in the end fell to my lot, simply, I believe, because I was powerless before my companion's superior command of his own language. I was quite content. There were Madonnas on the walls of the room; the sheets were clean; and certainly it seemed better to share a room with a young and inoffensive-looking stranger, rather than have no bed.

In the morning Godewaersvelde declared itself more profitably. Lumpish, angular yokels in blue smocks were lounging at the road corner where the "estaminet" was built. They looked as if their noses and bodies as a whole had been dislocated—so ridiculous were their attitudes and facial outline. A little girl, daughter of my hospitable landlady, was squatted in ungainly fashion in the cartway, alternately sifting cinders and refixing her disarranged hair. She was a typical Flemish lass: yellow of locks and with light-blue eyes. Other little girls like her could be seen plodding towards the neat-spired church just behind the "estaminet"; but their pig-tails were spruce and trim, and their faces glistened with the exertions of the recent matutinal wash. There were dogs idling among the men: limp, dejected creatures, in singular keeping with their masters. The sight of this general inertness recalled the recent words of a "smart" Transatlantic visitor who had said that Europe was very well, but that the people wanted tickling a bit. These Flemings were distinctly like Europe in this lady's opinion. But what grotesque contortions the practice of such a delightful liberty would have produced in them!

The red-roofed little houses sprawled away from the cross-roads, some towards the gay monastery on the hill, others in the

direction of the church. Towards the monastery the grain of the fields was ready for the sickle, and the hops stood twelve and fifteen feet high. There was no lack of fertility in evidence. But the rain of the night had turned the highway into a bog that did not invite exploration. The trees, also, dripped moisture in steady lines. It seemed better to leave the modern monastery to itself and return towards the heart of the village. The bland, vacuous stares of the idlers were enough to seriously indispose a weak-minded person. They looked upon me with a fish-like, rather than a human, expression. Doubtless, however, sensibility and thought were at work beneath their torpid exteriors.

The "mairie," or town hall of Godewaersvelde, is a tiny little cottage set among the other cottages of the hamlet, facing the church across the village green. There cannot be much municipal business in so small a place. The dames stood gossiping at their doors while feeding their poultry in public, or despatching their offspring towards the church porch over the way. Here the gathering of little Flemings was great for the size of the village. And anon, when they had sufficiently diverted themselves with staid talk and posturing, the children entered the church and formed themselves into a square in the north transept, where the curé stood awaiting them, book in hand.

You would have thought the presence of a stranger—and especially a foreigner—in the church would have been hailed by the village scholars as a most welcome distraction from the restraint of the catechism. But it did not seem to affect them in the least. The curé was evidently much more sensitive. The youngsters stared straight before them, and responded in that sing-song chorus which is so thoroughly suggestive of tongue service and dormant intelligences. And yet it was an inspiring, well-kept little church, with good honest colouring on its ceiling, and woodwork about its nave in harmony with the solidity of character of the Fleming himself. The clock in the belfry striking the hour was equally impotent to pique the wits of these sober little representatives of the coming generation.

Though Godewaersvelde is a village of France, there is about as much affinity between a Parisian and a Hottentot as between a Parisian and a local Fleming. From some aspects the contrast would be favourable to the Parisian. But one is

prone to think there must be compensation somewhere for the native of Godewaersvelde, as for the rustic Fleming in general. It may lie in the fact that he is innately as honest as he is apparently ridiculous.

No man need think himself wronged who pays but a couple of francs for his bed and his breakfast. It were ungenerous in the extreme to fancy that this leniency on the part of the Godewaersvelde innkeeper was due to a defect of intellect rather than a virtue of the heart.

I am willing to believe these Flemings of Godewaersvelde were types of their rural brothers and sisters elsewhere in the land.

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER III.

FRANCIS DEVONDALE had resolved that, despite Slowton ways and Slowton prejudices, he would follow up his introduction to Zenobia and learn to know her better; but several days passed, and still no opportunity presented itself of which he could make use to bring about the meeting he so much desired. Save for one momentary glimpse at the window he never even saw her, nor did his increased knowledge of Slowton society give him any reason to hope for better fortune in the future.

But the young man was far from being discouraged by the difficulties which, to a Slowton youth in his position, would have appeared insuperable. His spirits rose with his realisation of all the adverse circumstances that he would have to reckon with, and his determination to have his own way only became the more unalterably fixed when he found that this would be no easy matter. But he was in no hurry; he had plenty of time before him, and could afford to wait; and, in the meanwhile, the house on the opposite side of the road was an unfailing source of interest to him and his young charge. For Cecil regarded Zenobia in the light of those lovely heroines of whom he had read in many an old romance. Her beauty, and her loneliness, and the shy yet proud manner—so utterly unlike that of the silly, self-asserting girls with whom alone he was able to compare her—had appealed to the boy's imagination and won his heart. All the fancies and dreams of his long hours of enforced idleness were filled with thoughts

of Zenobia; she was his enchanted princess, his stately queen of love and beauty, his high ideal of perfect womanhood. Now, for the first time, he had found a friend who could understand and sympathise with him in his silent worship; and tutor and pupil got on so well together that the boy's parents were as much astonished as delighted, and felt assured that at last they had succeeded in solving the perplexing problem of Cecil's education.

At the end of a week Mr. and Mrs. Paxton went away for a few days, and Mr. Devondale promptly availed himself of the opportunity thus offered to call upon the Brabournes. He would have done so before, but as the social code of Slowton seemed to be a somewhat peculiar one, he thought it better to abstain from mentioning his intention to Mrs. Paxton lest she should inform him that tutors were not expected—or required—to pay calls, and that Mrs. Brabourne would regard it as a liberty on his part were he to do so.

He crossed the road, therefore—watched cautiously by Cecil's envious eyes—and knocked boldly at the door of the forbidding-looking mansion where the lovely princess was imprisoned. A young and rather pretty maid-servant responded to his summons.

"Mrs. Brabourne is not at home, sir, but she'll be in, I think, in a few minutes. Miss Brabourne is at home."

"I will come in, then," he said. How grateful he felt to kindly fate for at length favouring him so highly! "I suppose Miss Brabourne is disengaged?"

"Oh, yes, sir," with a demure smile.

Zenobia was very much disengaged. In her aunt's absence it was not necessary even to feign an interest in her carefully-chosen book, and the girl had thankfully let it slide to the floor, while she indulged in the unwonted luxury of doing nothing openly and with no reservations. She was not naturally either indolent or idle, but she was weary of perpetually toiling over trifles that could never be of the smallest practical use to anybody. She had no taste for the endless fancy work that her aunt, in common with most of the ladies of Slowton, considered the only suitable occupation for ladylike fingers; and she was aware, moreover, that she did it very badly.

Perhaps it was because Zenobia was feeling tired and bored on that particular afternoon, that she looked almost as much pleased as startled when Mr. Devondale

was announced. Evidently, Slowton customs had not prepared her to expect him.

"I fear your aunt must have thought me very discourteous for not having come before," he remarked; but Zenobia soon reassured him.

"Oh, no; she did not expect you to come. Only the ladies pay calls in Slowton. Did not Mrs. Paxton tell you?"

"To tell the truth," and he laughed, "I never asked her. You see I am a stranger, and I can't be expected to know all the local customs. I think in your town, Miss Brabourne, one grasps at the chance of a little pleasant society. I have only lived here ten days, but I would not lightly lose it; for, as you told me, it is not the Slowton way ever to know anybody any better."

"I suppose in other places people are much more friendly?"

"Why, yes; so far as my experience goes. In Oxford and London they certainly are."

"I wonder you stay here, then," she said slowly.

"You forget my bear."

"No; but surely you could find another in a pleasanter place."

"I assure you, for a young fellow like myself, this engagement isn't to be despised. To tell you the truth, my people and I have fallen out; I won't be what they wish, and they don't wish me to be what I want, and this bear-leading business is a sort of compromise. So long as I can make it work, they can't say much; and it is working at present beautifully."

"And you like Cecil?"

"Oh, immensely; he's an awfully clever little beggar, too, and has no end of ideas of his own. It's hard on him to be so crippled. Sometimes he can't leave his room for days together."

"It is very sad!" and her dark eyes were full of tender pity. "I did not know it was so bad as that; and he always looks so patient and good!"

"Couldn't you come over and see him sometimes? He'd like it awfully if you would!" said Mr. Devondale, speaking suddenly on the impulse of the moment.

"But—what good would that be to him? And what would Mrs. Paxton and my aunt say?"

"We must see about that; but, as to Cecil, I know it would do him all the good in the world. He has no sisters, you see, and though he's very fond of his

mother, she isn't much of a companion to him. Now you could talk to him about lots of things, and read with him—he's no end of a reader—and though he's only fourteen, he's very good company, I assure you. Would you mind coming, if the thing could be arranged?"

"I should like it, if he would really care to see me; but—I don't think I should interest him. I've very little conversation, I'm afraid."

"Cecil wouldn't think so. He told me the other day he couldn't bear people who talked when they'd nothing to say. He prefers 'little conversation' when that 'little' is to the point."

"And will Cecil always be so delicate?" Zenobia asked, looking earnestly at the strong, handsome young fellow before her, and contrasting him mentally with the wan face and slight figure of the crippled boy.

"Oh, I hope not. With care, they say, great improvement is probable; but, of course, he will always be lame."

Mr. Devondale had every opportunity of judging of Zenobia's powers of conversation during the twenty minutes or so that elapsed before Mrs. Brabourne's return; and his opinion was decidedly favourable. She did not say very much, perhaps, but then she never talked for the sake of talking; whatever she said was said sympathetically, and with real interest in the subject under discussion; and she was a most attentive and appreciative listener. Thus to converse with her gave him real pleasure, quite apart from the charm of her beauty and simplicity; and when Mrs. Brabourne at length appeared, the two young people were talking so pleasantly together that they never heard her approach, and Francis Devondale was actually laughing at the very moment when that formal-mannered lady opened the door.

"Zenobia, I understand—oh, Mr. Devondale, are you there? I am glad to see you. Ring for tea, Zenobia—or have you had it already? No! Then ring at once."

"We have not had it, for I thought you would be home before this," Zenobia said, as she complied with her request.

"Mr. Devondale, you will stay and have some tea? It will be up immediately. I met Mr. Priestley just now—our Rector, you remember—and he was making many enquiries after you. He wished to know if you were one of the Devondales of Dartmouth."

"Did he? He is a very interesting man, the Rector, and I hope I shall see more of him."

"He is most highly connected; his mother was a baron's daughter. He would, I think, be glad to find that you are one of the Devondales of Dartmouth."

"Would he? That's very kind of him. I must ask him about them," and then somehow he glided away from the subject in such a way that even Mrs. Brabourne did not venture to return to it again. Yet she did not appear to resent his silence on this point, for she continued to treat him with marked courtesy, and, for her, actual geniality. True, her manner was hardly calculated to give the young man so pleasant an impression; but Zenobia was better able to judge of it, and wondered greatly to find Aunt Martha so amiable. Mr. Priestley must certainly have given the Devondales of Dartmouth a most respectable character, or she would never have been so gracious to Cecil Paxton's tutor on the mere chance that he might prove to be one of them. The Rector was a power in Slowton, and his opinion always carried much weight; though less, it is to be feared, on account of his good common sense and excellent understanding, than of those "high connections" of whom all Slowton felt justly proud. "A well-known family; oh, yes, and wealthy, too; but eccentric—extremely eccentric;" such had been Mr. Priestley's summing up of the Devondales of Dartmouth, and it had struck Mrs. Brabourne's fancy amazingly. Despite her prim formality, too, the old lady was not altogether blind to the tutor's remarkably good looks, which she had distrusted at first as being really too good for his position; in fact, according to the narrow little theories of life that obtained in Slowton, he looked too distinguished a man to be quite a gentleman; but this suspicion once comfortably laid to rest, Mrs. Brabourne was ready to go to the opposite extreme, and regard him with all reverence as some disguised scion of a noble house, who was pleased for a time to lay aside his greatness, and comport himself as an ordinary everyday individual. For the present, this explanation satisfied her; but should it prove to be a delusion, life would go hard with that young and handsome tutor if Mrs. Brabourne had the ordering of it. Of all this, however, Zenobia knew nothing.

But, despite Mrs. Brabourne's utmost efforts, the half-hour that succeeded her

return was far less agreeable than that which had preceded it. So that Mr. Devondale was not led to prolong his visit unduly, and thereby offend against the unwritten code of Slowton good-breeding. He went, had he only known it, just at the right time, and Mrs. Brabourne pronounced him "an exceedingly gentlemanly young man," which was much—very much—for her to say; and of a tutor, too! But then the Devondales of Dartmouth! Ah, that implied so much! Why, it might mean almost anything—or nothing. Who could say which?

## CHAPTER IV.

THE country round Slowton was not beautiful, as even the warmest admirer of that dreary little town was obliged to confess; it was flat and unlovely, and neatly mapped out in level fields, intersected by straight roads, bordered on either side by low, ruthlessly clipped hedges.

On this dull November afternoon, when every place looked its greyest and dreariest, the Slowton scenery was appallingly colourless and depressing; and Zenobia, walking along those straight, admirably kept roads, was certainly to be excused if life presented itself to her imagination in peculiarly unattractive hues, and nothing seemed really of any particular moment one way or the other.

The afternoon and the scenery were enough, without doubt, to account for her melancholy state of mind; and it would be invidious to enquire whether the fact that nearly a week had passed since Mr. Devondale's visit, and she had not so much as seen him in the interval, had anything to do with the universal lack of light and colour. Such, however, might well be the case; though, of course, had such an idea been suggested to the girl herself, she would indignantly have denied it. To do so, under the circumstances, would have been both right and natural.

Presently Zenobia paused, and surveyed the dismal landscape with sadly questioning eyes. Was all her life to be passed amid these wearisome, monotonous scenes? Were all her days to be as flat and uninteresting as these low-lying, dreary meadows, from which the chill white mists were already beginning to rise? It was not an inspiring prospect, and she turned from it with a little involuntary

shiver, and began hastily to retrace her steps towards the town.

At the distance of a few paces from the place where Zenobia had been standing, another road crossed hers at right angles; and up this road—had she chanced to glance in that direction—she might have perceived the figure of a solitary pedestrian approaching from a little way off. But she did not once look towards him, and so never saw the eager gaze with which he was regarding her; or observed how he quickened his steps when he first caught sight of her standing there alone. So Zenobia went on her way in blissful unconsciousness; and he followed her at some little distance, debating with himself whether or not he should at once hasten forward and accost her, or wait till he should be sure of his ground, and more completely master of the situation. An accident presently helped him to decide the question.

There were not many people passing along the road Zenobia had chosen for her walk that afternoon, and, therefore, it was the more surprising that she should see Mr. Devondale, a few minutes after she had turned to go home, coming towards her from the town. She was about to pass him with a stately little bow, but he had not been hoping for this meeting for days past to have it cut so exceedingly short now.

"You are in great haste, Miss Brabourne," he said, with a smile. "May I walk back a little way with you just to tell you of our grand idea, Cecil's and mine?"

"If you are going my way——"

"I am," promptly, as she hesitated, "with your permission. It seems such an age since we met, that I fear you may have forgotten our talk about the boy."

"Oh, no; indeed, I remember every word of it!" she protested eagerly.

"And you have not repented your good-nature? I hope not, for I believe Mrs. Paxton is going to take advantage of it."

"Does she wish me to come and see Cecil? I shall be very glad to do so," she said, in the slightly formal manner that contrasted so pleasantly with the free-and-easy familiarity of many of the girls of his acquaintance; good fellows enough in their way, but terribly addicted to slang, and occasionally a little lacking in refinement. Zenobia never talked slang; she did not even know any to talk, which was a great comfort.

"She does indeed. The boy has set his heart on it. You know he has been ill again?"

"No; I am so sorry."

"I thought, as you live so near, you were sure to have heard."

"Not in Slowton. To be near is a very different thing from being neighbourly."

"It seems so, certainly; but we will try to cultivate a better spirit, you and I," he said, feeling that no task undertaken in such companionship could possibly be too hard for him.

Zenobia smiled, partly, it may be, from pity of his ignorance, and partly from pleasure at the idea of mutual helpfulness his words suggested to her. After all, there would be no harm in trying, though she had lived in Slowton too long to be in any way sanguine as to the result. No harm to the general community, certainly, and much satisfaction to the individual Zenobia, whose ideas were becoming considerably enlarged as she listened to the boldly impracticable suggestions of this young and light-hearted tutor. He had such a gay, careless way of discussing the solemn Slowton customs, that she found her own superstitious respect for them steadily decreasing as she walked along beside him; not saying much, perhaps, but, for that very reason, thinking the more.

Meantime, all unperceived by them, that solitary pedestrian followed along the dull road, now drearier than ever as the short November afternoon began to darken into night. But Zenobia no longer found the scene depressing or colourless; she no longer thought anything about it, so interested was she in her companion's plans for the future, and so interested was she—though as yet she was far from grasping this fact in its full significance—in himself.

"Then when Mrs. Paxton offers you this rare opportunity of improving your knowledge of English men of letters, and those works by which you ought especially to know them, you will take the proposal into your favourable consideration?" he asked, with a laugh.

"I will, certainly, and I hope my aunt will approve."

"She will be conferring a favour, you see, and Mrs. Paxton, as I believe, doesn't often ask favours. That clock is actually striking half-past four! I'd no idea it was so late. I fear I must be turning back."

"Why, I thought you were going my way?"

"So I was, but I must go Mrs. Paxton's now, for she asked me to give a message for her at a farm over there, a little beyond where I met you, and I said I'd be back by five. Good-bye, and don't forget Cecil."

"No fear of that," she said. "Tell him I like his plan very much."

"He'll be delighted. Thanks—for us both," he added, with unwonted earnestness, and a glance that brought the colour to Zenobia's pale, sweet face, and a new light to her eyes.

So they parted.

Zenobia pursued her way to the town, the outskirts of which she was already approaching, while Mr. Devondale rapidly retraced his steps by the road they had come together but a few minutes before, wishing—oh, how devoutly!—that Mrs. Paxton and her message were both sunk "full fathom five," to the bottom of the sea. It was an unkind and illogical wish on his part, since he ought in common justice to have remembered that, though Mrs. Paxton's message now compelled him to leave Zenobia, but for that same message he would not have met her at all. But when did man in love—and Francis Devondale was very seriously in love; of that he was fully persuaded in his own mind—ever remember anything of justice or logic, far less act reasonably in accordance with their suggestions, when compelled by a sense of duty to walk swiftly away from the beloved object?

Mr. Devondale, absorbed in his own reflections, passed that solitary figure on the road, scarcely seeing him in the deepening twilight. There was nothing remarkable in the man's appearance to attract the attention of a casual observer, though any one accustomed to read the faces of his fellow-men might have found one here that would well repay perusal. Not a good face at all, and yet with something not wholly unattractive in the dark eyes, and firmly-cut mouth and chin. A man with a certain amount of character, undoubtedly; though possibly that character would not go far to gain him a good name in the world—at least in such a select, respectable world as that of Slowton.

He glanced at Mr. Devondale sharply as he passed, then paused, and watched him as he strode quickly away till his tall figure was lost in the twilight.

"Like, very like," he muttered. "If

only it were not so confoundedly dark, and I could have seen——" he broke off abruptly, and quickened his steps, so that in a few minutes he overtook Zenobia just as she was turning into Queen Street.

She heard the hasty steps behind her, and looked round.

"Wait a moment," he said peremptorily, "I want to ask you a question."

His manner puzzled her, but she supposed he merely wished to ask his way in the town, and waited accordingly; though with her head carried a little higher than usual.

"Who was the man you were talking to just now?"

Zenobia started, as well she might, at this very abrupt enquiry, and turned her dark eyes questioningly upon the speaker.

Despite his shabby clothes, and general air of not too respectable poverty, there was something in his face that riveted her attention by its strange familiarity. She forgot to resent the impertinence of the question, and replied simply:

"Mr. Devondale."

"Frank Devondale?"

"Yes."

"Then I was right! And what is he doing here, and how come you to know him?"

Zenobia drew her slight figure to its full height, her grave eyes still fixed earnestly upon his face.

"By what right do you ask me this?" she said.

"By a better right than you can question. What is Frank Devondale doing here?"

And again the girl replied, though sorely against her will: "He is Cecil Paxton's tutor."

"A tutor!" and he laughed sardonically. "Devondale a tutor! Upon my soul, I shall take to the trade next! A pretty teacher of youth, truly! But he shall teach you no lessons, girl. Be assured of that!"

"I do not understand you," she said coldly.

Zenobia felt as if she must be dreaming. That this man, a stranger, should dare to address her thus; to dictate to her, Zenobia Brabourne, whom she should or should not know, and who should or should not teach her! And all this actually in decorous Queen Street, within a stone's throw of her uncle's respectable mansion! Oh, the thing was preposterous; manifestly absurd! She must be dreaming, surely! And there he stood all the while, and looked at her; a half-stern, half-humorous smile upon his worn but still handsome face.

"I do not understand you," she repeated; "and—and you have no right to speak to me in this way."

She turned to go, but he detained her.

"I have every right," he said, standing in front of her so that she could not pass; "and so you will acknowledge when you know me better."

"I have no wish to know you at all. Let me pass," she exclaimed.

"Unfortunately, I cannot consult your wishes in the matter. It seems to me quite time I came home to look after you. I've neglected my duty shamefully hitherto, but I'll see to it now—if only to thwart Devondale!"

"What do you mean? Who are you?" she asked, in her surprise and bewilderment.

He laughed strangely.

"I am Herbert Lovell—your father, Zenobia!"

And he turned away abruptly, and left her.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER VIII. SHADOWED.

THERE is a process in dramatic art, called being "followed by the lime-light," which is no doubt complimentary, but can, one would think, hardly be pleasant. A dazzling sort of effect to the eyes must surely be produced by living in such an atmosphere of perpetual radiance. At all events, such was the experience of Private Harry Deacon, after that night when he played the part of Minnymin; for Drummer Coghlan kept him in the lime-light of his eye; made himself indeed, so to speak, a kind of double, and appeared to be suddenly endowed with miraculous powers and multiple individualities. Did Private Deacon take a stroll in the country, sure enough the trim figure of the drummer seemed to rise like an exhalation from the roadside. When the first note of the first post broke the stillness of the night, Coghlan was sure to be seen loitering on Patrick's Hill, swishing his leg with a trim little cane, and gazing calmly downhill to the city that looks so fair in the twilight. As if by some occult influence, Private Deacon seemed drawn up that same hill.

"I'll save that lad or I'll perish," said the drummer to a comrade.

"Is it from the drink then?" replied the other.

"Of course it's the drink," replied Coghlan sharply, coming to a sudden standstill, and staring straight into his

companion's face; "whatever ille would I be likely to be after kapin' him from?"

"Why, you're getting as grand a Temperance fellow as Father Mathew, as stands so stark and stiff there at the end of the bridge: why don't you give a preachment about it, Coghlan?"

"I'm down for indulgence," said Coghlan with a grin.

The other whistled long and low; but dared not ask any questions. Drummer Coghlan was counted a bit of a spitfire, yet his patronage and companionship were desired because he was knowledgeable, and stood well with his superior officers as a "smart soldier," and one who looked well after the boys of the drums and fifes, and gave them a hiding now and again when they deserved it—which was by no means seldom.

He was therefore not a man to vex by indiscreet questionings; especially upon such a delicate subject as who might be the object of his present passion. It was popularly supposed that the adventure with the Corporal's widow—now a four-year-old story—had had a bracing effect upon Drummer Coghlan's character; at all events, he had risen much in public (that is regimental) estimation since that time, and another stripe adorned the sleeve of his tunic.

Once Coghlan, craftily dodging Deacon's steps, met the Adjutant. Once counted for nothing. But again, not far from the Wishing Well, the two came face to face.

"That devil's after him thin, eh?" said Coghlan to himself, as he saluted, and stood aside to let the officer pass; "there's small chance for the spalpeen if he's up to any bloomin' tricks. Glory be—'tisn't as if he was a bloomin' civilian; it's easy enough for the likes of them to take up wi'



the scam o' the earth—they don't know nothin', they don't—but when a man's got an honest red coat on his back, why can't he keep an honest heart underneath it? The divil's in it all—bad cess to it."

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, Mister Solger," cried a shrill voice from the other side of the hedge, and Coghlan wheeled round, as if he had heard the words "right about face," to see two sticks of legs straddled across the ditch, and a tatterdemalion with stiff arms, and head mockingly uplifted, taking off his own soldierly carriage.

"What are ye, ye spawn of the divil?" said Coghlan, shoving his forage-cap to the back of his head in his perplexity.

"Divil yourself!" shouted Tim—for indeed it was no other; "did ye see that English officer goin' along? Well, he's a frind o' mine, do ye see. Och! it's no spawn I am, but a grown man, an' one o' great consideration."

"A friend o' yours?" said Coghlan with a mighty contempt. "Tell us another, sonnie; that one won't ketch on."

"Didn't he giv' me a rale silver bit, an' didn't I boy a swatestuff poy for little Patsey, and a ribbin for Mary Rooney—her as I'm to take before the holy praste one o' these foine days, when I've got a potato patch to start me i' loife like a gentleman? An' there's more to tell than that same too, for hearken now——"

At this Tim cleared the ditch, and came to Coghlan's side, hugging himself in his rags and speaking in a whisper that was enough to make any one's blood run cold.

"Didn't he giv' me the letter i' one hand an' another silver bit in the ither one?"

"What letter, ye robber o' the dead?" screamed Coghlan, but the elfin thing was up and off, a flitting shadow in the sunshine, soon nothing but a cloud of dust in the distance, and the far-off echo of a ringing voice that sang a rebel song.

"Shure, an' it's a spoy he's makin' of the atomy, and the letter was a snare," said Coghlan, smiting his thigh with a mighty thud, while a sturdy oath further relieved his feelings. Then two figures came in sight, at first far-off, like tiny silhouettes against the sky, then nearer and nearer. A man and woman pacing slowly side by side, the woman weeping.

"It's Harry and the girl Norah, an' somethin's throublin' her," said Coghlan to himself. "Is she a snare set for his feet—like the button-nosed, monkey-mouthed, bat's-eared varmint that's just fled—or is she true as fair, the crathur?"

Coghlan was a drummer in a marching regiment, but he was also a gentleman in the best sense of the word.

He took advantage of a little turn in the lane to wheel round and set off briskly towards the town, swinging along, and only stopping once to gather a ~~big~~ bunch of berries for little Abednego's supper.

"When a man's walking with his girl he don't want no one, comrade or no comrade, to keep a look-out on him. I'm that way myself with 'Liza; but don't you come none o' your Minnymin tricks wi me, Harry Deacon, lookin' like a scared crathur as some one's huntin' to the grim death itself. It's not that way a man looks when his girl's last kiss lies sweet on his lips—I know better than that, I'm thatway myself with 'Liza—but there was blue murder in your eyes that time, my boy; glory be this night and day, and the blessed little Missy could me true, be jabers, so she did!"

But Drummer Coghlan reckoned without due consideration for the possible accidents of life. He slipped on a bit of orange-peel in the barrack yard and dislocated his ankle. Then came days when he was tied to hospital, mornings when the grave Scotch Sergeant came and looked at him as if he were about to measure him for his coffin, and when the cheery face and voice of Dr. Musters did him as much good as a pint of ale. Gentleman Jack, too, was visiting a sick comrade in hospital, and somehow got talking with the drummer, by that time hobbling about on a crutch and one slung foot; and their chat drifted—how goodness only knows—to little Missy and little Abednego, who, by the way, came to visit his master in the ward, brought by a wary comrade, and cheered the sick mightily with his pretty antics, subsequently disappearing with startling rapidity into the bosom of Jim's blue hospital shirt, and peeping from that stronghold at the grey figures assembled round. It was wonderful what an interest the Colour-Sergeant took in the story of poor 'Bednego being "spread" by Missy, and that young lady's manifold perfections, and the way in which Miss Elsie, and Miss Alison, and Mrs. Henneker, to say nothing of the Major his own self, doted on the ground she set her little foot on.

Be sure 'Liza was not left out in these recitals, and Harry Deacon, and the story of how he played the part of Minnymin would have followed in due course, had not Coghlan gulped it down like a bolus, getting red in the face with the effort.

It was a great relief to talk to the Colour-Sergeant, and to manage to bring in 'Liza every now and then, as it were, by the head and shoulders. To talk of those you love is often the next best thing to seeing them. Writing to them is also a prime amusement, and Jim spent much time inditing letters—a process both laborious and painful, but delightful in its results to good Eliza, who read and re-read the epistles to the cook, and carried them about in her apron pocket, proud, indeed, of such tangible love tokens; proud also to tell her young ladies that the Colour-Sergeant of number one company was so good to Jim in hospital, and even took him books to read, and "loved to hear about little Missy, so he did, and Jim loved to tell about her—the blessed darling!"

"What an amiable Colour-Sergeant!" said Elsie, laughing; "it is very nice of him to take such an interest in us, I'm sure."

But Alison had nothing to say; only she kept her needle quite still in her hand for a moment or two, and added no single stitch to the rose-bud she was tracing.

Then Elsie went on.

"Jim, as you call him, is not the only person favoured by the new Colour-Sergeant, Eliza," with her eyes full of merriment, eyes that had hardly yet learned to weep; "he lent us a book, too, didn't he, Alison? Why, here it is; we have never looked it fairly through yet. Do put that stitching away, and let us try these chants over, dear. I thought choir practice went better than usual last night, didn't you?"

"I think it would go a great deal better always if Mr. Green and Mr. Verrinder kept away. The improvement is always most marked when they happen to be on duty; you really must allow that——"

"What have I to do with it?" said Elsie, pouting.

"Well, I must say, I think you encourage Mr. Verrinder——"

"Encourage Mr. Verrinder!" cried Elsie, and down went Colour-Sergeant Smith's book, with its face on the floor.

"Yes; encourage him to fancy he has a voice."

"Oh, indeed!" said Elsie, suddenly calm as a summer's night. "I don't tell him to his face that he sings like a crow—as you do."

"He does sing like a crow," said Alison; "and not a nice crow either. As to Mr. Green, I really do wish he wouldn't blush so every time one speaks to him."

"Every time you speak to him, you mean," replied the other viciously.

"Elsie!"

And a warning finger was upheld. Chaff of that kind was forbidden, and the merry maid knew it, but occasionally transgressed.

"He is a ridiculous person altogether," she went on, picking up the long, narrow chant-book, and smoothing out its leaves tenderly; "his recitation at the Soldiers' Evening on Saturday was dreadful; when he said, 'on the Gramplan Hills,' he pointed right up to the big chandelier. Then Mr. Blizzard's dying gladiator, do you think they can really have been like that, Alison?"

"Never saw one," said Alison shortly, in the interval of counting stitches.

"But," continued Elsie, "a gladiator with a squeaky voice is surely a mistake; and what a bump he came down with when he died! That was surely a dramatic blunder; he ought to have subsided gracefully—like a sort of dissolving view, you know. I got tired of the whole thing, until Sergeant Smith sang, 'Bid me good-bye!' That made me feel what cousin Frank calls 'blubby'; it did, indeed. It was so sweet and sad. It quite haunted me. 'Bid me good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!' He got quite pale while he sang it. I like that sort of thing; it is so impressive. I was glad they encored it, though he did seem so unwilling. He is a very dignified sort of personage altogether, isn't he? Eliza says the men call him Gentleman Jack."

"Do they?"

"Soldiers are so knowing."

"Are they?"

"Alison, you are too provoking; you bury yourself alive in that embroidery."

"It is for the mother."

There was no division of interests at the Hennekers'. The Mother was "mother" to every one; the tall, gaunt, eagle-faced Major was "Dad" to all alike; which shows how Alison was welded into the family, like a little nugget of gold into a big one.

The mother was the centre of the home; a placid, ox-eyed woman, with soft hair that waved on either side like a parted stream. A woman whose belief in good was so profound that she ever sought for some excuse underlying all evil. Every one ministered to her; she and little Missy were a sort of human household, Madonna and Child—things to be worshipped, watched with fond eyes, and kept in flowery surroundings. Mrs. Musters

said the Hennekers made a ridiculous fuss over one another, but when Missy lay stricken down by a childish fever, she came and cried in the drawing-room, and the girls called her an old dear, and nobody ever minded what she said any more. Her bark was, indeed, always worse than her bite, and it was a pity she barked so much and so loud. That was what they said, laughing, among themselves. And they went on making as much fuss with each other as they liked—that is, no fuss at all, only loving each other dearly, and kissing the feet of little Missy, metaphorically, all day long.

Elsie had alighted on the music-stool, and was playing a tender minor chord or two from out of the Colour-Sergeant's book of chants. All at once she cried out:

"Alison, Alison! Why, look! What is this? There is something like a dragon's head, very faint, almost scratched out; and yet—it is—yes, I am sure it is—a crest, with some letters intertwined. You know what I told you the other night? I am sure—sure—sure there is a story belonging to—Gentleman Jack. He is a Prince in disguise. You'll see, it will presently turn out as I say. Look for yourself, Miss Won't-believe."

And Alison, who had laid down the precious rose-bud and come slowly to her cousin's side, answered, also slowly:

"I do not see that it concerns us, Elsie, and your crest looks very like a smear. Whatever it is, do you think we ought to pry into it? Do you think we ought, dear?"

Elsie blushed; nevertheless she had the boldness to vow that she could distinguish the letter C, and continued to stare at what her cousin had been pleased to designate a smear.

"Give me the book," said Alison, grave and imperious; "it was lent to me, not to you."

"I am sorry," said Elsie, capitulating at once; "I will not say another word about the . . . griffin—I wouldn't have done so at all—but, oh, I do so love a story, even if it's only a make-believe!"

"Let us talk of something else," said Alison.

"Why, I have really vexed you—your hand trembles. Oh, Alison!"

"Look at Missy, what is the child doing?" came by way of answer to this.

Missy was standing in her usual attitude; the sweet little head, running over with curls, a bit on one side; the hands

meekly folded; the eyes pathetic; and there before her, on a low chair, bright coppers, all of a row; pennies in one row, halfpennies in another, and a lonely little farthing all by itself.

"Missy, are you playing shop?"

A long sigh, a weary shake of the precious head.

"N-o. I'm casting up to see if I can buy little Abednego. I do want him so very badly. He's such a dear, wee thing, and likes to be spreaded ever so much better than Minnymin—Minnyminsqueaks and is naughty when he is properly spreaded."

"Pogr Minnymin," said Alison gravely, "it is naughty not to care for him any more."

"Please don't talk about him; he's getting tiresome," said the Fairy Queen, with a pout; "and you know I can't do without anything—can I? Nobody could, you know."

"The drummer won't let you have little Abednego," said Elsie confidently.

"Not if 'Liza coaxed him?" was the unexpected answer, uttered with a look of divine faith.

"I shall make her write a long letter to him," continued the little maid, speaking with quiet resolve and deliberation; "quite a long big letter—like he writes to her—sides and sides all writed over; 'excellent reading,' that's what 'Liza says, and full of words."

Then to the cat, who came in unconscious of waning charm, treading delicately, with straight, uplifted tail, and simmering purr:

"Go away, Minnymin—you've gone tiredome—I want to have little Abednego all for my very own self."

After all, Missy was only like the rest of us. We most of us have our Minnymins, and long for an Abednego.

When the pretty one and all her show of coppers had been captured and conveyed away by the unconscious 'Liza, the two girls were very silent. Elsie wanted to say something that seemed to choke her; Alison's thoughts had drifted, and her fingers moved mechanically among the soft, bright-hued silks.

The little room in which they sat was a sort of girl's paradise; an odd, cornerwise room, rich with the countless treasures of the years, and a small cottage piano—mellow and true—in the recess by the fire. It was wonderful, when the One Hundred and Ninety-Third got "the route," into how

small a space all the treasures went—always excepting the piano, which, at such times, was apt to be somewhat of a white elephant. The subtlety with which things packed into each other, a table absorbing a chair, and a bookcase slipping inside both, was remarkable. People whose lot it is to be wanderers on the face of the earth, with, so to speak, no abiding city for very long together, are used to that sort of thing, and think nothing of it. In truth it has its charms; driving monotony out of life, and gilding the future with a blissful uncertainty.

Wherever you go, you all go together—that is a great pull. There is no leaving your friends behind. True, all are not your friends, but all have an interest for you, since they are part and parcel of "the regiment." Among yourselves, you permit yourself the use of the definite article. It indicates much: defining the estimation in which, in your heart of hearts, you hold the corps to which you all belong. Elsie was thinking of a possible wrench and rent in this community, and thoughts seethed within her, seeking utterance.

An easily stirred, yet not shallow soul, she only needed the ripening of a year or two to make her a delightful woman. At present her ideas were a bit crude; her methods lacking the skill of the diplomatist. She was only a thing in embryo yet—this dainty, laughter-loving maiden; but tender of heart, and with a delicate shrinking from seeing others suffer.

Twice she essayed to speak—twice let the half-uttered word glide into an episode taken out of the Colour-Sergeant's chant-book. Then she took her courage by both hands, yet not looking at her companion; staring, indeed, out of the window, seeing only a scarlet mist that was in reality a company going out to drill.

"Alison—do not be angry with me; if I say something that may vex you."

Struck with the unusual gravity of her tone, Alison looked up amazed.

"Angry?" she said, with an intonation that conveyed impossibility—"angry with you?"

There was only a knot of braided golden hair, a pair of well-made shoulders, and a supple but not compressed waist visible, but to these Alison addressed her remonstrance. Elsie did not turn. The company had passed by, and she saw a grey mist now, but red or grey were all as one to her, all blurred, all things of naught indeed.

"Yes—angry—because we do not often speak of such things—not as some girls do—therefore, it may seem strange to you."

Silence again, and this time Alison does not break it by a word.

She knows.

She holds her work firmly, passing and repassing the needle with resolution. In such details may emotion be traced.

"You know that I want to speak about Captain Dennison—about Hugh. Yes: I call him so in my own mind sometimes. I should like—Alison—do you hear? I should like to call him so—always, and I think—I do indeed—that Dad would like it too. I have seen him watching you sometimes—I have seen him touch mother's hand, ever so gently, when you two—you and he—have been standing side by side, and—Hugh—looking so happy. He is so good, Alison; was there ever a man so highly thought of in a regiment, from the highest to the lowest, as Hugh Dennison in ours? We all know what the Colonel thinks of him, and what the men think of him; we have heard the story of it all over and over again."

Still silence, but the needle plies no more, and Alison's eyes are covered by her hand.

"As to how he—what he—I don't think any one ever loved any one as Hugh Dennison loves you, I don't indeed; and then, to hear him say—"

Like a faint echo comes from Alison:

"To hear him say—"

"To hear him talk of leaving the dear old regiment, of exchanging and going to India, and to know—to know all the while—"

"Who did he say this to?"

Alison's eyes are not covered now. They shine, they demand an answer.

"To me."

"When?"

"Last night."

At last she turns, looking like some pretty animal at bay; then rushes on with her words, the tears coming whether she will or no.

"I know why he said so to me; it is because he sees that I can read his heart like a book, because he knows that I know whose name is written there on every page, because he knows that I can feel for him, that I am sorry, sorry, sorry. Oh, Alison, why is it that you do not care? Surely your heart must be a heart of stone! He is a man to be proud of, to be glad of, and he thinks of you—only you. If you had

seen the look in his eyes when he said that about going away, you would have been sorry; you could not have helped yourself."

"I am sorry——"

A quivering sigh cuts the words in two, and Elsie's soul faints within her.

To suspect a thing, even to fancy you know a thing, what a difference there is between that and having the bare and cruel fact set plain before your face!

Elsie looks out of window again now. She cannot bear to look at her cousin.

"So you mean there is no hope for him? Is that what you mean by saying you are sorry? Tell me, can you not try to love a man so noble and so true, so tender and so brave, if trying is needed?"

The answer is a puzzle to which Elsie finds no solution.

"I might have done, I cannot tell; I used to think I might; I know that he is all you say and more—more, a thousand times more. I tell you that I might have done, but—not now—not now."

Elsie hears the door open and close. Then she turns round, her eyes swimming. Her experiment has been a deathly failure.

## A NEW COLONY.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

SELDOM, if ever, has a book been so opportunely published as Mr. Selous's latest addition to South African literature.\* While the fate of Mashunaland is trembling in the balance; while at any moment the British South African Company's forces may come into collision with the warlike Matabili; and while many of us do not know anything at all about Mashunaland—where it is and what it is like—this new book comes to give us light on the subject. It is not only capable of teaching us much, but is of the greater value in that its author has been familiar with the interior of South Africa, and with the natives and resources of that hitherto little known district, for twenty years, having passed through and become acquainted with it on his various hunting expeditions.

The book itself may be divided into three parts: the first dealing with hunting expeditions from 1882 until 1887; the second with the journey of the expe-

ditionary force of the British South African Company; and the last containing various hunting reminiscences, mostly dealing with expeditions previous to 1882.

Mr. Selous, when setting out to Africa in 1882, had no intention of again pursuing hunting as a profession, but intended to turn ostrich farmer. Finding that trade in a very bad way, however, he determined to again set forth for the interior, and accordingly pursued his way through the Transvaal; and he tells us that, contrary to the preconceived ideas of many people, the Dutch Boers, whether in the Transvaal, the Free State, or the Cape Colony, are full of genuine kindness and hospitality towards strangers, and that only once did he meet with any inhospitality.

At Klerksdorp the "boys" were engaged: including Norris, a waggon driver, and Laer, a young Griqua: and a start was made with a waggon, a team of oxen, and provisions and trading goods to last a year, with a journey of five hundred miles in front before the camping ground was reached. On one occasion not long after starting, there lay before the little party a track of dried grass on which the sun poured fiercely with no shelter. Unwilling to take his cattle across it, Selous determined to ride to a village, by name Bamaangwato, during the night, and ask the chief Khama—the same, by the way, who is at present said to be ready to help the British South African Company with a large force of men—permission to go through his territory along the River Limpopo, and then to rejoin the main road to Matabili, which lies north of the South African Republic, and through which the direct route to Mashunaland would lie; the neighbouring state of Manica, the name of which has frequently cropped up of late, being to the west of Matabili and Mashunaland, the whole of them being some considerable distance below the Zimbesi. In the course of this ride occurred an incident which might have led to fatal results. Selous had dismounted to rest his horse. "I had been lying upon the ground for perhaps a couple of minutes, listening to the slight noise made by my horse as he cropped the short, dry herbage. Suddenly the sound ceased. For a few seconds I lay dreamily wondering why it did not recommence; but as there was still silence, I rolled quickly over on my stomach, and looking under the bush to ascertain why my horse had stopped feeding, I saw that he was standing in an

\* "Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa," by Frederick Courteney Selous, C.M.Z.S. (Rowland Ward & Co.)

attitude of fixed attention, with ears pricked forward, intently gazing towards the road. I instantly turned and looked in the same direction, and as instantly saw on what the horse's eyes were fixed. There, not thirty yards away, and right in the open, a lioness, looming large and white in the brilliant moonlight, was coming up at a quick, stealthy pace, and in a half-crouching attitude. In an instant I was on my feet, and the lioness, probably observing me for the first time, at once stopped and crouched perfectly flat on the ground. The saddle and rifle lay out in the moonlight right between me and the lioness, though nearer to me than to her. I knew she must be pretty keen set, or she would have retreated upon seeing me. . . . Obviously the only thing to be done was to get hold of my rifle; so I walked quickly forward into the moonlight towards where it lay against the saddle. I must confess that I did not like advancing against the lioness, for I knew very well of what hungry lions are capable. However, whilst I took those dozen steps she never stirred; but just as I stooped to grasp my rifle she sprang up with a low, purring growl, and made off towards some thorn-bushes to the right." Alone in South Africa in the dead of night with one's rifle midway between one and a hungry lioness, hardly seems the sort of situation one would choose to be in.

Selous gained the permission he wanted from Khama, and then it was rendered unnecessary by the weather breaking up, so that he was enabled to take the ordinary route; and in June found his hunting camp on the banks of a small stream in Northern Mashunaland, from which he conducted his hunting excursions. He employed some Mashunas, who followed him in the hope of getting some meat, to strengthen the fences enclosing his camp and cattle kraal. In the camp were the waggon, to which the horses were tied at night, and a tent for the boys. The waggon was one known as a buck waggon, with a tilt on the hinder part, where Selous slept when in camp, stores being packed in the front part, and a large canvas sheet being stretched over the whole, sheltered by which, and under the waggon, slept the driver Norris. It was as well the camp was strengthened, for a visit was paid that night by some lions, who growled around all night, but did no damage. Soon afterwards Selous nearly lost his lad Laer by means of a wounded lion, which they

approached thinking he was dead, whereas on their approach he quickly roused himself, growling. Selous rode off safely, but Laer's pony shied and threw him, and Laer, having a thong fastened to his waist-band and his bridle, was fast bound to the horse. The lion was but thirty yards away, and the pony pulling the lad towards the ferocious beast. Luckily Selous got a shot in before the pony reached the lion, which seemed not strong enough to spring, and shot him in the right eye.

The time was occupied in collecting specimens, orders for which Selous had from museums and dealers, until the waggon contained very nearly as much as it could hold, and as it was too early to return to Matabilliland, Selous determined to make his way down the Zambesi. The first part of his journey was through unknown regions; his party consisting of Laer, two Matabili boys, two of Khama's men, three Mashunas, and a pack-donkey; the latter, however, soon fell a victim to hyænas. Small as his party was, whenever it approached a Mashuna village the inhabitants fled, and it was often a work of much time to persuade them to supply the little party with provisions—such is their fear of the fierce Matabili. Journeying on through a country which was not rich in game, the Zambesi was reached and travelled down as far as Zumbo, which is under Portuguese rule, and the return journey was made mostly by another route. In the course of this return journey Selous had a bad attack of fever, which prostrated him for some time. He, however, reached his camp on the fourteenth of September. This expedition to the Zambesi concluded the hunter's trip for 1882, but in 1883 Selous again set forth for the interior, and pitched his camp on the banks of the Manyami river in Mashunaland. One hunting trip must be very like another, so that it would be unnecessary to go into the details of each trip, but it will suffice to pick out any event of special interest. We have a short description of the plateau where the Manyami and Mazoe rivers take their rise, which was written by Selous in his diary long before there was any idea of Mashunaland becoming a British colony: "The open grassy downs extend over a large tract of land, and without doubt form the finest country for European occupation in South Africa. The climate is delightful for the greater part of the year, though during the months of June and July it is rather bleak and cold.

This high plateau is intersected in every direction by running streams that never dry, and as the fountains which supply them well out from the highest portions of the downs, a large area of country might be put under irrigation. The whole year round a cool wind blows from the south-east—a wind which in the winter months becomes so keen and cold that it seems to come direct from the frozen seas of the Antarctic Circle. This, in fact, is a country where European children would grow up with rosy cheeks, and apples would not be flavourless. Although these downs are very open, still one is never out of sight of patches of forest trees, so that the luxury of a good log fire at night can always be enjoyed—a luxury which will be appreciated by South African travellers who have journeyed through the treeless waste of the Cape Colony, Orange Free State, and Transvaal." Mashunaland, in point of health, would seem to compare most favourably with some of our colonies, the climates of which do not seem to be conducive to the welfare of rosy-cheeked children.

In July Selous shot an ostrich but could not procure his feathers, the cold being so bitter and the rain so heavy as to drive him to camp, and they were taken for him by a Griqua hunter, but unfortunately were burnt. Soon afterwards he shot a huge bull eland, which may now be seen at the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. The following are the measurements: standing height at withers, five feet nine inches; girth of neck, midway between jaw and shoulder, five feet one inch; depth of body, measured over the curve behind the shoulder from the wither to the middle of chest, four feet one inch; breadth of chest between the fore-legs, one foot two inches. These last three measurements were taken after the skin had been removed. This eland skin was almost lost, a hyæna creeping through the fence of the camp, seizing it in the full light of the fire, and making off with it. He was pursued, dropped the skin, and got away at the time, but coming back to try again, paid the penalty for his rashness.

On completing the story of this trip, Selous breaks off to tell of the various tribal wars, all of which go to prove the warlike character of the Matabili, who are apparently always spoiling for a fight, and are the general terror of surrounding tribes. One of their peculiarly ferocious massacres of Mashunas took place in 1883, and in 1884 Selous passed through the

country, and camping one night among the ruins of the deserted kraals, saw with his own eyes the devastation that had been wrought.

In the course of the next expedition (1884) the waggon broke down—a wheel collapsing—and it is worthy of note that this is the only mention of such an accident in the whole book. Two hunters were camped three days' journey off, so Selous set out for their camp, and finding their wheels the same size as his own borrowed one, returned, and took the waggon to the hunters' camp, and moved the waggons of the two parties together until they came to a spot where there was wood suitable for repairing the damage. Here Selous says he felt that he would have an opportunity of testing Dr. Livingstone's incredible statement that a lion's bite gives no pain. He was after a lion with only a single-barrelled rifle, and dismounting to fire, only wounded the beast; his horse became restive, and made it impossible for him to mount. The enraged lion advanced upon him, when suddenly his people, coming up, let loose the dogs, and the lion, frightened by the shouts and barks, swerved, and passing Selous, galloped off. He was followed, and his skin added to the collection.

All this time Selous had had no difficulty with the natives, who treated him well, but in December when he reached Matabilland he experienced some trouble. The people of Matabilland have a great objection to the killing of many hippopotami, so Selous refrained from killing these big beasts when in their territory, except when he wanted food, and then only when he had asked the permission of the chief Lo Bengula. But in the previous year a trader had employed several Grikwas and Colonial natives to shoot hippopotami for him, their hides being in great demand. The trader was summoned to Bulawayo, and was there on Selous's arrival in December. But Lo Bengula, while enraged against the trader, said that there was no case against Selous, who returned to his waggon, and was very surprised when, a few days later, he was summoned by messengers from the King to Bulawayo. He was told that all the white men who had been in the hunting district were to be tried—the trader, one Piet Ostenhulsen; Grant, the hunter who had helped in the waggon difficulty; and Selous.

In the course of a long trial Selous was told that he had killed all the King's game, and, being a witch, must bring them all to

life again. He said to the man who was instigating the bother, "Very well, but if the lions come too, will you mind counting them?" which stopped his flow of language considerably. On the third day the King delivered judgement, and Selous had to pay ten heifers. The whole business cost the trader three hundred pounds, and Selous sixty pounds.

Feeling aggrieved at this conduct, Selous determined that his next trip should not be into Lo Bengula's domain, but into Khama's. During this trip little of interest occurred. But during the season he did not obtain enough specimens to execute all the orders he had, and determined to spend another year in Mashunaland if he obtained Lo Bengula's permission. For this the chief demanded a "salted" horse, worth about sixty pounds—a salted horse being one which has become acclimatised, and is not liable to suffer from the various ills which beset horses and cattle in various parts of South Africa. Selous obtained permission to start at once and stay as long as he liked, and also he obtained leave to shoot five hippopotami. As the object of this expedition was to obtain the skins and skeletons of large animals for mounting in museums, two waggons were taken, thirty-two bullocks to draw them, some loose cattle, five pack-donkeys and four horses—one of which, being apt to turn sulky and refuse to go at any pace, was nearly the cause of a catastrophe. One of the animals, specimens of which Selous on this trip was particularly anxious to obtain, was the white rhinoceros; but he failed to find one, and says that, though some few may still survive, long before the close of the century the white rhinoceros will have become extinct. Later on, he shot a lion, which was first sighted chasing a koodoo by broad daylight—a most unusual thing, for lions almost invariably do their hunting by night. On arriving at a river named Zweswi, Selous learnt that a large herd of elephants had come up the river and struck off in the direction of the thick bush. After them he determined to go, and in the course of chasing a wounded zebra, a freshly broken tree, which had evidently been broken by an elephant, caught his eye, and he soon saw that the big herd had passed along during the night. He was unable to follow immediately, as he had but a few cartridges in his belt, all loaded with expanding bullets, which were useless against elephants; so

cantering back to where the waggons were outspanned, and taking Laer and a four hundred and fifty-bore single Metford—he was still too weak from an attack of fever to carry his heavy ten-bore gun—he set out, determined to see what he could do against the elephants with the smaller weapon. He soon came up with the herd, which he found to be one of the largest he had ever seen—nearer two hundred in number than one. It was a stroke of luck to come up with them so soon, for "one seldom comes up with the animals without having followed them for several hours, and as a rule it is a pursuit which entails great hardship: fatigue, thirst, and exposure to the great heat of the tropical sun." Selous was unluckily mounted on the sulky horse. He picked out a bull with a fine pair of tusks, and rode down to about a hundred yards to his left, and then dismounted and fired at and wounded him, but a cow elephant, hearing the report, wheeled round and made after the hunter, who galloped off, thinking soon to distance his pursuer, wheel round, and cut off the wounded bull. But the horse would not go, and instead of being left behind the cow gained, so Selous determined to make for the bush and dodge her, which he accordingly did, and again galloped after the herd. He soon bagged another bull, one bullet stopping him, a second killing him. As elephants running away in large numbers do not go fast, Selous was soon up with them, and shot another bull, when he suddenly became aware of a cow elephant charging him, and again galloped off towards a mass of granite rocks. Again the horse would not go, and Selous had to run for it, leaving the horse, expecting never to see him alive again. But a curious thing was to happen. "The horse was standing absolutely still, with his head up and his fore-feet planted firmly in the ground as if carved in stone, and the elephant, which had then ceased to scream, and was making a curious rumbling noise, was standing alongside of him, smelling about with her trunk. . . . I suppose that the elephant must have touched the horse with her trunk, as he suddenly gave a jump round. He then walked slowly to the rocky ridge behind him, and again stood still about fifteen yards away from the elephant." Soon the elephant got wind of Selous and charged towards him, offering a good chance for a shot, and her career was stopped short. After the elephants



again Selous killed another cow, and was again charged by a cow, this time wounded, but the same thing happened; the horse would not gallop, Selous trusted to his legs, and got into the bush; the elephant smelt the horse, did not touch him, and trotted off into the bush. The result of this hunt was six dead elephants, though the tusks were not very good ones, the biggest pair, that of the first bull, weighing forty-one and forty-three pounds respectively. Soon after two more elephants were killed, the tusks of one of them weighing eighty-eight pounds together.

The year 1886 was passed in like manner, but in 1887 Selous determined to cross the Zambesi, and accordingly started on the fifth of June for a village named Wankie's Town, where he intended to cross and follow the river as far as its junction with the Kafukwi. At the village of Shampondo, a Batonga headman, some little way below Wankie's Town, troubles began. The villagers were suffering from a scare about a Matabili raid, but having satisfied the chief's unjust claim, the party were allowed to proceed, and proceed they did, having to bribe other chiefs, and continually being deserted by guides. The crisis arrived at Minenga, where they were obliged to camp immediately alongside the village, the back of the camp being within ten yards of the chief's kraal. The chief, however, pretended to be friendly, and gave them food and drink, and persuaded them to stay another day. All seemed peace when Selous went to bed, flattering himself that he was on excellent terms with the people. The next day Selous went out hunting, provided meat for the villagers, arranged for an early start in the morning, and after a good supper turned in. Soon, however, he was roused to hear the news that all the women had left the village, and that something was wrong. What the something was soon appeared in the shape of three guns, which were thrust through the interstices of the camp fence and fired almost in the faces of the inmates. Selous retreated into the grass amidst a mixed crowd of his own boys and villagers. On reaching the grass the men rushing out fell over him, knocking him over. He sprang up and made a rush for the long grass, and there sat listening. "I had had time to realise the full horror of my situation. A solitary Englishman, alone in Central Africa, in the midst of a hostile country, without blankets or anything else but what he stood in, and a rifle with four

cartridges." He began to try and find some of his boys, but did not succeed, and, coming to the conclusion that all who were alive had fled, determined to make the best of his way off himself. After narrowly escaping running into a party of villagers, he set off with the Southern Cross for his guide. Trusting himself in another Batonga village, he was robbed of his rifle, and was left to continue his journey without even means of procuring food. After many adventures and difficulties with the natives, he reached the village which he had determined to make for, thinking the remnant of his party would make their way thither. This he found to be the case, and learnt that in the night attack twelve men had been killed and six more wounded out of twenty-five. He found they had done as he had, making the best of their way south during the night. Once one of them was close by Selous, and heard him shoot, but could not see him, which would be accounted for by the fact that he must have been then cooking the meat, which he did in a hollow. But now they were safe, and their difficulties over, save that they still had to sleep in blankets. Selous learnt afterwards the cause of the attack, which was to procure powder at all hazards, the villagers wanting it to protect themselves against the Matabili. After reaching Panda-ma-tenka at the close of this disastrous journey a rest was taken, but not for long, and Selous set out for the Barotai Valley, hoping to obtain permission from the chief Lewanika to travel and hunt in the following year to the north of the Kabompo river, one of the main affluents of the Upper Zambesi.

On this trip nothing of particular interest or excitement seems to have taken place, save the sinking of a canoe by a hippopotamus, with the loss of a large tusk of ivory weighing sixty pounds, two bags of cartridges, all the trading goods, provisions, plates and cups, and so forth.

This trip was the last of Selous's hunting expeditions, the value of which to the pioneers of Mashunaland cannot be over-estimated. He had learnt to know the country and all the bearings; the natives, and the different dispositions of the various tribes; the climate, and all particulars necessary for an expedition. So, when the time came for the colonisation of Mashunaland, who was more suited to guide the party than Selous? What happened at this time is told in the second part of the book, the story of which we will tell next week.

## IN PONCHA CITY.

OUT in one of the far Western States of America, nestled under the foot-hills of the great Rockies, lies the little frontier city of Poncha, upon which, during our Western life, we were dependent for our stores and mails. It is needless to say that Poncha is of recent growth. Only three years back it consisted of two railway depôts, their respective water-tanks, a dry-goods store, section house and saloon. It is needless to say also that, for obvious reasons, Poncha is not the real name of the city in question. But Western cities are of rapid growth. Already we have two hotels, one run by the city sheriff; two saloons, the largest of which is presided over by a judge; two section houses, one belonging to the Denver and Rio Grande, and the other to the Santa Fé track; a court-house, for Poncha is the capital city of the county; a shaving saloon, a meat store, and three dry-goods stores; a drug store, run by the doctor, who, being a member of the political party then in office, had taken over the post-office as well; a Roman Catholic and a Primitive Methodist Church, the Episcopalians being kindly allowed the use of the latter whenever there happened to be five Sundays in a month; and I should not be at all surprised if, by this time, the little city is lighted by electricity and has a telephone laid down to "N' York," for we go ahead apace out West. To return to the drug store. Doctor Sanborn, or to give him his full name, which he much preferred, Doctor Washington P. Sanborn—no one knew what the P. stood for—was a great friend of ours, and he was much exercised, poor man, by our receiving each mail letters in black-edged envelopes. One day, when I had ridden in as usual to get our mail, he called me into his inner office, where he pulled out teeth and performed other little operations which the sensitive might prefer being done in private, begged me to sit down, and said, with a face expressive of the deepest sympathy:

"I guessed I'd break it gently to you," holding out the familiar envelope as he spoke; "you've been unfortunate ever since you concluded to settle here, and that's a fact. Most every mail you've heard of a death!"

So then I had to explain our custom of writing on mourning paper for a certain time, at which he looked relieved, and

explained in his turn that it was only usual to announce a death on it in those parts, and he and his wife had felt so sorry for our many bereavements! All the Poncha worthies rejoiced in nick-names, and being thoroughly democratic they were most of them titles, such as Squire, Judge, General, Colonel, Admiral, and Boss. The old-world names also greatly flourished. The saloon was run by a Smith; the newspapers—no Western city that respects itself but has its party organs—were edited by a Johnson and a Frazer; the meat market was served by a Perkins, and the name of the city sheriff—poor man, his office was no sinecure—was Brown. Then there were Judge Craig and Squire Cameron, mostly to be found in the intervals of leisure tilted up on a couple of rocking-chairs under the verandah of the court-house, in handy proximity to a saloon. Squire Cameron was a particular chum of mine, and it was most interesting to talk to him, for he and his wife had been in the State long before its palmy and, looked at from a ranchman's point of view, decaying days began. She would often talk to me, too, of those earlier times before the Utes were kept in their reservation, and tell the tale of how the Ute chief, with a hundred dusky bucks at his back, had come up to the store her husband kept then on the frontier to trade skins, and caught up her little four-year-old son with one hand, whilst with the other he held out a hare, saying as he did so: "Trade Pappoose? Jack-rabbit? Jack-rabbit Pappoose. Trade plenty good!" She told the tale even then, although it had happened forty years back, with a quavering voice, and a dimness in her keen old eye, for the Pappoose had never grown up, and a little mound somewhere upon a creek, with a pine-tree at its head, was all there was left to show of her fair-haired baby. Her husband, good man, had but one weakness—and the best of us are but mortal—a too great fondness at times for Bourbon whisky; a drink for which, by the way, he professed the utmost contempt, and used to resolve to give up entirely at least twice a year. But, alas! every now and again he would give resolution a treat—with usually fatal results. He had his own way, however, of setting things right, and would always at prayer-meeting, next time after he had offended, put the monetary value of the whisky he had taken into the collection; first deducting, with

characteristic caution, the price of his nightly glass of toddy !

Since I left, the good old Squire and his wife have gone "over the range," and slumber peacefully in the new lot that he had purchased with such pride in the Poncha Cemetery.

Another of my friends was Mr. Perkins of the meat store, who came of the class of the English labourer. He had been lucky enough to emigrate whilst he and his wife were quite young married folk, and had done well ever since. Being English, we became very friendly, and he was never tired of telling me what a wonderful country America was.

"Seems more like the promised land I used to read on at school than aught else, when I was a kid in the old country. Why, look, I ha' meat—not pig meat, butcher's meat—three times a day regular to my meals, I do. You go out to the ranch an' visit my missus and the gals, and hear what they thinks on it."

For it seemed Mr. Perkins had far too great an eye to the main chance to leave the ranch to care for itself whilst he was looking after the meat store ; his "missus and the gals" "held it down" for him whilst he was in town.

They milked thirty cows twice a day for the creamery, cut the alfalfa and wood, shucked the corn, and even on a pinch mended fences and cut out cattle, to say nothing of such everyday matters as bedding down the horses, and watering the cow-brutes. To tell the truth I was quite anxious to see these renowned ladies, so eagerly accepted the invitation given me by "Poppar" Perkins to visit his family.

When I arrived at the ranch the first things I saw were six sun-bonnets beside six cows ; it was the six Miss Perkinses doing the milking. However, they were no wise disconcerted, but without stopping their occupation told me to hitch up my horse and to "go right in and lay off my hat ;" mommar "was around somewhere." So I did so, and was kindly greeted by Mrs. Perkins, an elderly lady in a blue calico gown and the ubiquitous sun-bonnet, a flapping buff one this time. She asked me into the parlour, the chief adornments of which were a very comfortable-looking bed and an imposing wardrobe, both of shining mahogany.

The bed was usually to be seen in the ranch people's best parlour, every one, when they were getting on in the world, investing in an imposing bedstead, and of

course, as the shanty rarely, if ever, possessed a spare room, the custom had its advantages.

There was, too, perhaps, when one came to think of it, something pathetic in the fact. It led one's mind back to the time when the owners of the ranch probably possessed no bed at all, but slept in their rugs upon the bare ground. What wonder if, as they got on in the world, recognising, as all primitive nations do, the advantages of sleep, they invested in a bed and placed it, with its huge snowy frilled pillows, in their best room, so that their friends, however poor the hospitality might be they had to offer them, should, at any rate, enjoy the luxury of a comfortable sleep. No doubt, too, that the usual Western good-night of "Sleep good" originated in the same fact.

I got on very well with Mrs. Perkins, who was a little puzzled, and yet proud of all her grandeur, but a good, kind soul for all that, and who addressed me as "Ma'am" at nearly every sentence. This, however, was no mark of respect, it was simply the etiquette of the country, so I returned the compliment. After all, it was only going back to the manners and customs of our forefathers, who ma'am'd and sir'd each other on all occasions ; and I never gained a reputation for good manners more easily than I did by conforming to this little Western custom. I suppose Mrs. Perkins saw me looking at the wardrobe with interest, for she informed me that the girls had bought it out of their savings, adding, with some pride : "An' you must not think, ma'am, that it's a mite of use ; it's just a dummy bit o' furniture. They gave five-and-forty dollars for it, just to look nice in the room."

I expressed my real feelings on the matter in a way which, I think, did me great credit. After all, in my time I had seen many things bought "just to look nice." Why, then, should I laugh at the climax of the six Miss Perkinses' ambition ? It was a very harmless one, at least. Presently, after the old lady had given me a glass of her cherry wine and some cake, she waxed confidential, and when she did so her talk was not of her brand-new brick house, or the number of cattle Perkins had on the ranch. No, she began talking of the old country and her mother, who, it seemed, was still alive. She had sent the old lady money to come out and live with them, but she "wor main afraid o' th' water," so she and Perkins had settled

enough on her to make her comfortable for life. I looked at Mrs. Perkins's lined and furrowed face; she looked herself so old, so very old, surely the "rest o' mother's life" could not, in all human probability, be long. And yet, she had told me she had come to the States a girl of seventeen, and frontier life, they say, is "hard upon women and cattle." Perhaps she was much younger than she looked. And meanwhile she chattered on.

"Ay, my dear, I knows the place where mother 'll lie in the churchyard, at the back o' they stinging-nettles, where the white violets grow; but I'll never lay my bones aside hers now. One would mind the partings of life less, look, if only one might rise by one's own come Judgement Day. Ay, there lies a terrible mort o' water atween us for sartin! I dreads the crossing o' he on the trump o' Doom!" and she looked at me piteously; but all I could think of to say to comfort her was:

"There shall be no more sea," which I murmured softly, though I hardly saw how it met the case. But anyway, she seemed to find a solution of the difficulty in it.

"An' I wor allus the best walker in the parish," she cried, with an air of triumph, and seemed so consoled by the idea that I said no more.

For, unconsciously or no, the old lady had laid her finger upon the key-note of all our lives out there. We all lived in hopes of "going home." Perhaps when we got our desire we might not be satisfied, and long for the wild freedom of Western life once more; the curse of many a wish lies in its fulfilment; but, from the time we landed, our idea was to make money to "go home." The Americans used to complain bitterly that we English simply made a convenience of their country; that we made money out of it to spend at home, and there was a great deal of truth in their complaint. Some of us, however, came home leaving our money, and sometimes our health, behind us, together with many hopes and anticipations that were never realised. Not all of us, however, wished to return to the old country, Mr. Perkins himself being a case in point; and certainly in many ways a Western State not fully settled up must be the paradise of the English day labourer; meat is five cents a pound; tobacco is equally cheap; milk, eggs, fowls, and ducks are to be had for a little personal trouble, which, to do him justice, he never grudges when he is his own master. And he has a good servant, too, for I will

say that the majority of that class out West were hard-working and sober folk. There was no cry for an eight hours day; often after working hard as long as daylight served them, they would turn to and do the evening's milking of many cows by the light of lanterns, and be up next day cutting corn by four o'clock. Certainly Mr. Hodge and his family work hard when they are working for themselves, like most other people, and in the States a large family is a blessing instead of a curse. The boys and girls, from the time they are big enough to crawl under a cow, learn to milk that useful animal; they go to school in the winter when there is nothing much doing upon the ranch, and somehow get a very fair education; there is plenty of milk, mush, and meat to bring them up upon, and they run about the ranches barefooted all summer, regardless of rattlesnakes! The one fault of the system is that they have, properly speaking, no childhood, but are little men and women, careful and troubled about many things before their time. As they grow older there is still work and yet more work to be done, and once they reach the age of twenty-one each "Jill" pre-empt's on all the spare acres round the paternal ranch, which usually was picked land on the creek. Upon being "deeded up," the pre-emption was thrown into the home ranch, till many a man blessed with a goodly family of daughters would find himself possessed of a ranch of a thousand acres at little or no expense. As for the "Jacks" of the family, they usually went into "real estate" further west, rode prospecting with cattle outfits on the spring and autumn "round-ups," till they too in their turn "settled up" on a snug locality.

This had been the case with the Perkins family; each of the girls had, as she came of age, pre-empted, so that the Perkins ranch was really a very large one indeed.

Besides Mr. Perkins, Poncha boasted of many other worthy citizens, among whom were Messrs. Johnson and Frazer, the respective editors of the two papers, the "Poncha Sentinel," and the "Poncha and Rocky Mountains Gazette."

Except upon paper, the two editors were the best of friends, which was fortunate, as the same printing-press brought out both papers, although they had separate offices, and the Government paper, for the time being, taking precedence of the other political organ, and coming out first in the week. Let party feeling run

as high as it might, and there was no doubt it did run pretty high at times. Messrs. Frazer and Johnson never attempted to boycott the printing-press; "live and let live" was their motto, and the "Sentinel" and "Gazette" came out punctual to the day! We revelled in little items of personal news in our papers, too, such as "Tommy Jones had lost a stud, and could hear of it by applying at the office of the 'Sentinel,'" or "Gila Tompkins had missed one of his chickens, and wanted to know why Jim Dorait had been seen prowling round his door-yard;" or again, "If Dick Stone's pedigree calf does not shortly return, neighbours and friends may be invited to a necktie social!" This last expression was a very determined one indeed, a "necktie social" being a slang phrase for a lynching; but the paper was a very good safety-valve, and much anger that might have led to serious trouble evaporated itself in black and white, without calling in the aid of the city sheriff. I shall not easily forget being introduced to that gentleman either, for the day I met him and E. introduced me, he had a real live murderer in tow, and they were both standing upon the steps of his office smoking huge cigars. I was introduced to and shook hands with both of them, and as we rode off E. said:

"Do you know who that good-looking young fellow was with the Boss?" and as I said I did not, she went on: "Why, that's Charley Blair, who is to be tried for his life next week for shooting another man!"

I looked back again; he seemed a mere fair-haired lad, and so good-looking, and I hoped devoutly he would get off.

"Oh, yes, they'll never hang Charley," said my companion. "He's a cattle man, and this is a cattle country, and the other man was sheep, for one thing; then he acted real mean for another, and if Charley hadn't shot him when he did, he'd never have given him a chance but shot him in the back!"

This train of reasoning did not strike me somehow as very logical, but all the same Charley got off, which I was glad of, and I met him and his girl wife, a pretty, fragile child, at a dance the same winter. I remember, too, that E. and I lunched in town at the Stewart House, and the sheriff and his prisoner were having lunch there too, and sat by us at table. It was a very decent lunch; every one paid twenty-five cents for it, and it consisted of fried beef

with two vegetables, pumpkin and cherry pie, cold slaw—a kind of uncooked white cabbage sliced fine into a mixture of cream and vinegar—cheese and stewed tomatoes. Coffee and tea, uncoloured Japan, were, of course, the only liquids to be had; but take it all in all, it was not a bad meal for a shilling a head. The worst of it was that it was all put in front of you at once, so that you had to eat at a great rate to get through; and then the knives were such a trial! They were made of some sort of metal that looked like badly-cleaned plate, and you could not pretend to cut with them, only hold on firmly to your food with your knife and fork and tear it asunder. The cups, too, were very thick and had no handles; but it is a shame to grumble at these minor details, for the table-cloth and serviettes were as white as snow, and everything was most beautifully clean. The table was quite full; many people who lived in their own houses boarded in the hotel, to save themselves the trouble of cooking, I suppose; but it seemed very strange that a man charged with murder, and presently to be tried for his life, should, whilst in custody, sit down amongst us all in this way.

I must not forget, in mentioning the Poncha worthies, Miss Bodkin, the city dressmaker. She had the reputation of being the most elegant woman in the town, whether upon the strength of always, summer or winter, wearing a white veil, I cannot tell. Be that as it may she had a very nice figure of her own, always went "back East" once a year to get the latest fashions, and would make you a "plain" dress for five or six dollars. She was always very kind to me, although I never troubled her professionally, but made the few new things I had myself; and once offered me thirty dollars a month and my board to come and sew for her! I remember gratefully, also, her giving me some delicious ginger ale and cake one day in August when I rode in very hot and dusty; and I fancy, from what she said, that she made a very good thing of the dressmaking. I am sure I hope she does so still. She had her little vanities, no doubt, such as the white veil, but when the small-pox epidemic desolated the little city, she took in and did for two small mites whose father and mother fell sick; and it was she who trotted down to the pest-house, white veil and all, and threw all the stray newspapers she could collect over the quarantine fence to amuse the

poor wretches who were kept there in durance vile.

Another well-known character in Poncha was the Admiral, as he was always called: a man of good family and a gentleman, who had come out West with fair prospects, and now lived from hand to mouth as best, or worst, he could. He had not even a room to call his own, but the people who kept one of the hotels allowed him, out of the kindness of their heart, to sleep in the feed stable. But he lived at the saloon; was the last man out when it closed, and was at its doors before it opened in the morning. The only thing he had to look forward to, as far as we knew, was the weekly "Punch," which E., who always had it sent out from England, passed on to him. He would look expectantly at E.'s buggy, as she drove in, till the paper was produced; then his face—he was a handsome, big man, with a leonine beard—would brighten up. And he would walk off with his beloved paper, happy, let us hope, if only for a little while.

Then we must not forget the resident minister, the Reverend Mr. Short, a very nice, well-educated, but somewhat melancholy man. Of course it was the custom of the country, but it must have been rather trying to him to eke out his income by dime parties. Then his stipend was paid so much in kind, with loads of alfalfa and hay, which, as he had no horse, he had to trade to one of the stores for dry goods, and I don't think he gained much by the transaction. In fact, the one remedy for all the Parson's various ills seemed to be a dime party. Did his roof want fresh shingles, we organised a dime party. Did his wife fall sick, a dime party. Did he want to go back East to see his people, why, we had a dime party. Then the choir was always a trouble, a not uncommon experience on this side of the Atlantic, and the Poncha choir were quite up to date in that respect. Poncha, too, was mad upon self-improvement, and during the winter months debating parties were held each week in the school. I remember Mr. Short making a speech at one of them, and when he had finished some of the children got up and picked his speech to bits, and told him candidly where they considered he had expressed himself wrongly about the subject in question. I think it reflected great credit upon his temper that he did not box the children's ears and send them to bed.

Poncha itself, situated as it was at the

bottom of the foot-hills, with a stream running through it, was a pretty little city enough, laid out in building lots, with wide side-walks, trees planted boulevard fashion along them in an irrigation ditch that kept them green all through the summer. All the houses, with the exception of one or two, were wooden, frame-built, with a verandah running along them, usually painted a light green or grey. One gentleman, indeed, with an eye to colour, had made a landmark of his residence by having his shingles painted a deep red, with a bright yellow lozenge-like device in the centre of the roof, which looked as if it might be intended to carry a coat of arms. All the houses of the retired ranchmen had a garden in which they grew vegetables and perhaps a flower or two, such as morning glories or nasturtiums. A building lot in Poncha and a garden seemed the Mecca of these hard-worked souls if ever they could, by great good luck, attain to it. And very few did, chiefly the older settlers, who had made money in the earlier days, and now sat under their own vine and fig tree; it mattered nothing that the grapes were nil, and the fig-tree nothing but leaves. They sat under them in rocking-chairs in solemn silence, doing nothing for hours save whittling a stick and manipulating a chew of tobacco. Their wives, the work of the house over, sat equally solemnly inside, rocking themselves backwards and forwards; they were busy trying to get rested. Sometimes, when a friend came to visit, they would rouse up and, if you had the time and patience to listen, would talk away for hours in a weary, shrill monotone of old days; never of the new house and garden, or the leisurely rest time they had come to in their old age, but of the struggling earlier days and the log shanty by the side of some lonely creek, when the blood ran quicker in their veins, and they were young and strong. Sometimes, but not very often, you came upon one or two who would talk in a strain that reminded you of the "Mayflower," and the old Puritan school of thought. These good people considered dancing sinful, and would grieve at the liberty accorded to the young people. But amongst them all, whether they "professed" religion or not, there was a great deal of what, for the want of a better name, I must call natural religion. They never, even although they might get fined for it, turned a tramp away hungry; they were hospitable to a fault,

and always ready to help in time of sickness, besides sparing many a moment to show an ignorant tenderfoot how to "fix things up jes so."

The girls were also very nice, bright, and, when young, pretty. They, unlike their mothers, had a craze for English ways, and wanted to put everything out, much to the grief of their cautious relations, who wished to do everything themselves when they "got round to it!" But alas, the getting round was sometimes a very long process, and impatient youth, a great reformer in all countries, would cut the Gordian knot in a manner that would make their careful parents hold up their wrinkled hands in dismay.

Since I left, Poncha, I hear, has had "a boom." It is to be for the future a health resort; two new hotels have sprung up, fresh building lots have been laid out, and a new depot is to be built. Let us hope the boom may be for the welfare of the little town, and that it may not share the fate of many another Western city, whose "boom" has only been another name for desolation and ruin.

#### AN ASCENT OF BRUNCU SPINA.

BRUNCU SPINA, the highest point in the Gennargentu mass of mountains in Sardinia, and also the highest peak in the island, is easy enough to reach. But you must first of all be prepared for two or three—at least—rough days among the Sarde mountaineers, and you must know enough Italian for common purposes. On these conditions the trip is a delightful one. It will also have just a tincture of romance about it, for there are still plenty of lawless fellows in Sardinia, and though they may not be audacious enough to lay hands on you, your guide will perchance rub shoulders with one or two of them, and perhaps favour you with an introduction. In the latter case the thing to do is to treat the outlaws with perfect good-humour, and tender them your wine-gourd at the same time you wish them "Bona dies." They are distinctly a queer people, these rural Sardes, but they have codes of honour which make it quite impossible for them to cut the throat of a man, or even rob him, if he have first of all played the genial host to them.

For our part we worked towards Bruncu Spina from the south. It is, perhaps, the most convenient way. Another way is to

leave the train at Oristano in the west, ride to Fordungianus—one day; thence to Tonara—two days; from Tonara ascend the mountain and descend it to Fonni or Aritzo—three days. From either Fonni or Aritzo you may reach the railway in another day, and so get back to civilisation. The expense of the trip ought not to exceed ten francs daily for the hire of guide and horses. As for the victualling, that is a matter about which nothing definite can be said. The man who takes a very large luncheon basket with him, and lives on its contents all the time he is in the highlands, is probably a good deal wiser than the man who is content to take pot-luck in the houses to which his guide conducts him of an evening.

We got to Aritzo on the third day of our travel in the mountains, sopped through and through. It had been a very long day. Starting from Seui at eight o'clock—Seui is a lovely spot, high up, with mountain peaks all round it, nuraghes on the hill slopes and woods in the valleys—we did not reach Aritzo until about eight o'clock in the evening. This included two halts of about half an hour each, and one involuntary halt of rather more than half an hour. Our first halt was at Seulo, where our guide had a cousin, and he told us such a sweet tale about the quality of his cousin's wine that we went out of our way a little to call upon him. The cousin was a swarthy, broad-shouldered carle in a brown leather jacket, and with a long gun in his hand. He had a vast number of females of different ages in his hut, and it seemed as if we should never separate our guide from the crowd of ladies. We drank plenty of wine here, and refilled our gourds. The good people shouted after us for a long time, and the echo of their voices seemed to carry on to the bleak mountain-sides which we had to tackle immediately after Seulo.

I never saw such a broken land as this of Barbargia—as the district is called. It was all abrupt ascending and equally abrupt descending. We were, of course, away from the high-roads. We had taken good care of that. The paths we followed were the thinnest of tracks scraped on the rocks. The weather, too, was unkind. It was mid-May—generally a rough time for mountains in Mediterranean lands. From the various watersheds we looked at the jetty masses before and around us, their magnificent forests lower down—haunts of deer, and boar, and foxes—and at the

clouds above and below us. Now and again these last broke cruelly upon us, and we took our bucketings with grim composure; and half an hour later we might chance to be in a green dell with high walnut-trees, wild cherry-trees, ferns innumerable, and charming meadows embroidered with flowers, all as bright as possible under a sudden rift of sunlight.

Our most important halt was in just such a little glen as this. It was the dinner-hour. We made but a dismal meal, because we had elected to take pot-luck wherever we went, and the best we could do before starting for the day, was to gather together the mean mutton scraps that remained from the previous day's supper. These had half melted into an abominable compound. They were not appetising. But the bread was good and the wine also was good, and our pipes afterwards as we lay at our ease under the shadow of a great hawthorn, and watched our steeds dining luxuriously off the finest grass in the world, and listened to the thrushes and blackbirds—our pipes also were good. As usual, though, Master Guide swilled more wine into him than was good for his brain, and so it is not surprising that an hour later he confessed that he had lost himself and us.

By this we had turned one more mighty ridge and had the ravine of the Flumendosa yet again beneath us. The Flumendosa is a noble stream. It has superb scenery in its upper reaches—dense forests, with towering mountains above on either hand, and perpendicular walls of rock hundreds of feet high. And in its lower parts, where it broadens towards San Vito—and creates a good deal of malaria—the meadows by its banks are beautifully broken with rocks and clumps of trees massed with wild vines, and the trout in its clear waters are good to see. Up here, though, on this particular afternoon, with storm signs all around us, the Flumendosa looked ominous in its deep, deep cutting, towards which by hook or by crook we had to strive, to find a ford whence we might begin another laborious climb of thousands of feet towards Arizo. The Sarde horses are plucky and strong, if not always sweet-tempered beasts. But I must say I pitied our quadrupeds when I saw what was before them. The pity seemed quite as applicable to ourselves, however, when Master Guide groaned and hiccupped, and murmured the disconsolate word "Lost!" We could not have been lost under more

romantic conditions. But romance is not a feather-bed, nor yet even an umbrella.

Between us we grasped Master Guide and shook some of his senses into cohesion. The sun gleamed again through the black clouds, and made the cork-woods lovely, and showed us the Flumendosa as a thread of silver at their base. But the sun did not help us. We were in a wood of scrub on our own account, with impassable cliffs below where the river ran.

Nothing remained but to halloo our best, and Master Guide also hallooed. It seemed like shouting to the moon—so absolutely unpeopled did the vast mountain valley appear. But at length an answering shout sounded. It approached us at length. And by-and-by two as nice-looking ruffians with guns and knives as ever a timorous man might shiver to behold broke upon us from below to the right. They had long black hair glistening with tallow, and their eyes were frightfully bloodshot. You should have seen with what energetic hospitality we grasped these ruffians by the hands, and urged them to set to at our wine! They hesitated at first about drinking, as if dubious whether they did not owe it to themselves to take rather than to accept what was in their power. Then their lips parted, and they smiled—such magnificent white teeth they had!—and down their throats gushed the tepid wine. Poor fellows! There was nothing much amiss with them at heart, I expect. They were outlaws, sure enough. Master Guide had a long and frenzied conversation with them. They told him a deal of their family history; and, he asked, how were they to blame if they had bravely acknowledged the responsibilities of a family vendetta, and had killed a man or two for the good of their clan? "Are you afraid?" asked Master Guide. We laughed to scorn the idea, while we surreptitiously fingered our revolvers. Then we told the new-comers that we felt no fear of them, and they slapped our shoulders gaily with their sinewy brown hands, and called us "gallant gentlemen," or something of the kind.

It was much more to the point that the good fellows could put us in the way of the ford. The Flumendosa, though beautiful, is a nasty river to tackle at random. It kills off many a bold Sarde every year. We had some rough work, though, to get to the riverside. As a rule, you may, if you can, stick to the back of the Sarde horse if the descent of a hill be at all feasible. Here it was too much of a trial:



we had not trained as acrobats. But it was just as much of a trial to lead the animals by the bridle.

Once across, we lay down on the grass by the river and, reckless of the drizzle that had begun and the three hours' hard work that remained for us ere Aritzo could be reached, smoked and finished our wine. The mutton scraps had been abandoned. We were hungry enough, but there was nothing eatable to be had.

Then on again, with our faces towards the black mountains. For awhile we followed the course of the river, rising gradually. Then we turned up a lateral glen, which soon broadened into a huge ravine up the eastern side of which we had to zigzag. For an hour the ascent was constant, and as steep as constant. The yawning hollow to the left grew more and more fearsome. It rained hard, and the harder the higher we rose. We had our cloaks to our ears, and looked anything but gay. Once or twice we passed a white house with vines in the ruddy earth tilled around it. It seemed a mystery why any one should choose such inclement and remote spots for a home. Probably the tenants were not law-abiding folk.

At last we broke on to one of Sardinia's extensive plateaux. The day was already waning; but through the dimmed light and rain we could see the reddish soil, the myriads of asphodels about us, and the heather and dwarf juniper which carpeted the land.

And so just at nightfall we came from this treeless tract into a valley of walnut-trees, with orchards and vineyards, cherry-trees and chestnut-trees, and the red-tiled houses of a village set slanting with the hillside. This was Aritzo. We were not at all enthusiastic about it, however. It seemed to us that no decent woman would encourage her husband to welcome into her house three such dripping wretches as we were. In fact, it was a reasonable fear. Twice were we denied shelter. And only after some warm arguing from our guide—who said we were Princes of the Blood in our own country, and much else that was untrue—did a certain gentleman in green velvet open his doors to us. This "proprietario" was, our guide said, a very rich man. At any rate, he had some pretty daughters in scarlet, a wife in black, and a handsome son in pale blue. All these, and a variety of others—from other houses, including those that had rejected our society—crowded into the room that

was allotted us. They are exceedingly fond of colour in Sardinia; their costumes are about the best thing in the land, after the game and scenery. They are also exceedingly inquisitive. I suppose ten people sat down with us to the miserable meal which was served to us at ten o'clock. As Master Guide whispered feelingly, even the wine was not drinkable. It was as near being an emetic as any juice of the grape can be. And yet our stern host periodically raised his glass and cried formally, with his eyes upon us:

"Let us drink! Your health!"

We looked forward to Bruncu Spina on the morrow as an antidote to all this discomfort.

There were fewer fleas in our Aritzo beds than we expected. The village is nearly two thousand seven hundred feet above the sea—an altitude fleas may reasonably object to.

At seven o'clock the next day we were called by our host and his son, who, with Master Guide, stayed with us unceremoniously while we made our toilet. The sun was shining, and all things looked bright. Certainly Aritzo, in its verdant recess in the mountains, was as pretty a village, thus seen, as a lover of the picturesque could desire; and the villagers in their crimson and black, their green jackets and brown jackets, added to the general colour of the place.

I suppose about a quarter of the then resident population assembled outside our host's house to see us off. But though the Sardes can chatter and quarrel famously upon occasion, they took the spectacle with which we provided them very stolidly. Not that they were not deeply interested in us; that was evident from the rumours about us that Master Guide told us were circulating freely in the village.

A Sarde host is a most punctilious fellow. He considers that he fails in his duty to his guest if he does not attend upon him to the very last. Our Aritzo gentleman went further. He leased himself to us as an additional guide for six francs. The fact was, he had a number of sheep on Bruncu Spina; he wanted to see how his shepherds were getting on with their cheese-making in their mountain huts; and the day seemed to promise admirably for a trip to the highlands. He did well, therefore, to combine his duties as a host with his interests as a stock-owner.

The fresh air was glorious as we clattered

through the streets and so into the woods. If only our gourds had been filled with palatable wine, instead of the medicine of the evening before, we could have let our spirits take their fling with entire abandon. The mountains were all clear; long gradual alopes and serrated ridges bare at the summit, but fairly clad with sparse trees a few hundred feet below. There was, however, something in the atmosphere that told of rain to come ere the day ended. As for the woods of chestnuts and oaks through which we pushed, they reeked with moisture. Nothing could have looked or felt fresher than they did, and their greenery and lush grass was rendered more interesting by the presence of sheep with bells about their necks, and infrequent shepherds with shaggy hair and scarlet raiment. One of these latter was strumming away on a set of pipes like Pan's own. The instrument is not uncommon in Sardinia, and is an undoubted legacy from very ancient times.

When we started we saw the red village of Tonara across the valley. But we soon left it and Aritzo behind, and for an hour or two were in the oak-woods. These gradually thinned as we rose out of the zone most convenient for oaks. The last of them were dreadfully weatherbeaten old things, with long, bare, blackened limbs rising above their leaves. Then they disappeared altogether. Alders in no great abundance took their place. These flourished best where springs broke from the mountain-side. But the alders too were duly left beneath us, and when we were well within sight of the patches of grimy snow which still coloured the Gen-nargentu group, we had nothing but mountain and scrub around us—dwarf juniper, arbutus, and such-like, and not much of that. Here and there the tiny mountain crocus showed itself and the dwarf pansy, like that of Etna, otherwise the winds and the thickening clouds engrossed us. The view to the rear, of course, enlarged enormously every quarter of an hour. The Barbargia landscapes are like nothing in England. You have mountains in huge terraces, the lower parts of each terrace thick with forests; thus the land drops gradually to the sea-level at Cagliari about eighty miles distant, which may be distinguished—though we distinguished it not.

Now there was some slight dissension between our host and us when we had got fairly within reach of the summit. The

good gentleman at times showed more interest in his straying sheep than in his guests. He stayed prattling to one of his shepherds an unconscionable time, so that we declined to wait for him. Of this he made a grievance to our guide when he caught us up; the average Sarde has a rare knack for making a mountain out of a molehill when his pride seems affected. Nor was he calmed by a clear statement of our case. We meant to stand on Bruncu Spina's summit before the clouds settled thereon, if possible; and we said so. This seemed absurd obstinacy in his eyes. He wondered what we should see more from the summit than we saw already. However, for the sake of the francs the gentleman would not leave us, even when we had passed out of the zone of pasturage.

Thus, three hours after starting from Aritzo, we came at length to the mountain-top, and stood some six thousand three hundred feet above the sea-level. A keen gust from the north greeted us as we leaped from our horses into the snow, and unslung our gourds to toast the mountain. We had ridden to the very summit—clear proof, if any were needed, that there is not a particle of danger, or even difficulty about the climb, though a fair amount of discomfort in the approach thereto.

We found a sheltered nook among the rocks for the quadrupeds, and then looked around us. The prospect was superb. Nothing in it was more alluring than the isolated pinnacles of mountain to the south and east, densely wooded almost to the top. These are dolomite crags, and in their fastnesses—some awkward enough to approach—the moufflon still breed in tranquillity. A brace of eagles were soaring over one of these "tacchi," as they are called. It was a noble specimen of a mountain crag, of grey and red rock, with a broad green girdle to its neck. Mountain peaks were everywhere—one noticeable in particular to the north, with a tremendous sheer precipice where it fell to the plain. But the clouds suddenly rushed upon us, and for awhile hid all from sight.

This was our Aritzo friend's opportunity. He shivered, nudged our guide, obtained his six francs, declined to do more than sip his own wine in a "farewell" toast, jumped on to his horse, and spurred the animal into the cloud quite recklessly. Our guide looked as if he yearned to do likewise. He had a very blue nose, and found little satisfaction in setting before

us the bread and goat's cheese, and uncooked broad beans, which made up our dinner on Bruncu Spina. As a picnic meal it was poor in the extreme. But we had some compensation in an ice-cold spring a little down on the north slope. And, after all, the bracing air was as good in itself as a table d'hôte at the "Grand." The horses remained unfed. In Sardinia when on a journey they are dieted but meagrely; and really they seem the better for this short commons. They are wiry, willing little fellows, worth a good deal more than they fetch, as a rule, at the hands of the Marseilles dealers who import so many of them. Really, there was no reason why our guide should shiver as he did. The cold was trivial. Our thermometer did not fall below fifty degrees, though under a sudden gleam of sunshine it leaped to eighty degrees in a minute or two. But like all guides, ours took only a base mercantile estimate of our adventure. He wanted to be down in Fonni as soon as possible, with the steeds snugly stalled, the consciousness that he had earned another ten francs, and in the neighbourhood of an acquaintance or two who would be willing to make a night of it with him among the wine-tubs.

Shortly after noon we gave him his way, and turned towards Fonni. The descent on this side was at first exceedingly steep. We soon came to a number of large oak-trees thinly set about the upland meadows. The view thence, backwards, was the finest impression of Bruncu Spina Sardinia gave us. The peak showed well, with its snowy patches behind and between two nearer shoulders of mountain. The green foreground, with a dashing little rivulet at our feet, composed a pretty picture.

We reached Fonni at four o'clock, after a most lovely ride through mountain glens, and later along tracks in the hill-sides whence the country for many a mile to the north was spread out below us. There is a decent little inn at Fonni, which at any rate saved us from the humiliating scenes of Arizo and elsewhere.

On the morrow we rode by the white, hard highway to Nuoro, again through charming country. And at Nuoro we took diligence for a long night drive to Macomer.

These days on horseback in the wilds of Sardinia are experiences not to be forgotten. The man who likes such experiences may confidently be recommended to try Sar-

dinia ere it is spoiled by Italian civilisation. It will take a deal of spolling, to be sure; but railways and roads of the first class are doing their work in the land. The spring must be the best time of the year for travelling in the island. In winter it is impossible to have anything to do with the mountains, and in summer and autumn the heat in the plains is insufferable, quite apart from the risk of fever, which ought not to be forgotten.

A holiday in Sardinia may be less expensive than a holiday in Scotland, even taking the journey into consideration.

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER V.

ZENOBIA remained standing where he had left her, like one stunned.

What was it he had said, and what was the meaning of it? She heard the words still ringing in her ears, but they conveyed no meaning to her mind: "Herbert Lovell—your father!" Her father? But her name was Brabourne; and her father—her father was dead long ago; had died while she was a mere baby; at least, she had always understood so. Oh, surely this man was mad, and she was trying to make sense of the ravings of a lunatic. She would trouble about them no more.

It was wisely resolved on Zenobia's part, and she turned away with an air of decision, walking on with a steady step, though with dismay and confusion in her heart. She reached her uncle's house, and went straight to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Brabourne received her with a stream of reproaches at the lateness of the hour, which the girl listened to for the most part in silence.

"It is extremely unladylike, Zenobia, to be tramping the roads after dark in this fashion, and I cannot imagine what possible satisfaction you can find in it. Really, a girl of your age should pay some alight attention to appearances, and not set all the laws of propriety at defiance in this way. Why, it must be absolutely dark outside!"

"I am very sorry," the girl said, feeling still as though thinking and speaking in a dream. "I was—detained."

"And what had any business to detain you, I should like to know? You must

really be more careful in future. When Mrs. Paxton asked for you just now, and I learned on enquiry that you had not yet come in from your walk, I felt quite mortified, I did indeed; and how to explain matters I did not know. Do not place me in such an extremely awkward position again, Zenobia, I beg of you."

"And Mrs. Paxton has been here?"

"Yes; she came to make what at first struck me as a very extraordinary proposition; but I have been thinking it over, and on reflection have somewhat modified my first view. On the whole, I am inclined to leave you free to please yourself."

"Yes!"

Would Zenobia ever forget the strangeness of that familiar scene, as she saw it at that moment? Would she ever forget how the well-known voice flowed on in the old, old stream of self-complacent, formal utterance? The comfortable—albeit somewhat over-fine—room, where lamplight and firelight strove softly together for the mastery; the shadows lurking in remote corners, and amid the heavy folds of the window-curtains, as though ready at any moment to leap forth and overpower lamplight and firelight alike, overwhelming them in one universal night; the erect figure of the old lady, sitting in her straight-backed easy-chair on the further side of the fireplace, her manner full of an assured self-importance, her handsome black dress arranged in prim, stiff folds, as though, having once sat down, she never intended to get up any more; the well-appointed tea-table, with its delicate china and bright silver; yes, she had seen it all often before; every detail was familiar to her. But as she sat a little apart that afternoon, and saw it with eyes still full of a vague fear and bewilderment, Zenobia felt as though it were all strange to her: strange and new, though so old; and the sense of unreality grew strong within her.

"She thinks it would be an excellent thing for Cecil if you were to study literature with him, and his tutor—that pleasant Mr. Devondale, you know—quite agrees that it would give the boy a new interest in his work to have some one share it. It is quite the correct thing now in the best society for young ladies to attend lectures on these subjects, and study them under the direction of their brothers' tutors. There are, unfortunately, no lectures in Slowton that you could attend; and as you have no brother, you cannot, of course,

study under his tutor. Mrs. Paxton, therefore, suggests that you should avail yourself of Mr. Devondale's instruction; but when I alluded delicately to the question of remuneration, she assured me that he would not hear of it; for he says if he has two to instruct, it will make his task far easier and more interesting. This is the point that makes me a little hesitate; but, at the same time, it reassures me, for it proves he has the fine feelings of a high-born gentleman. Indeed, I make little doubt now that Mr. Priestley was right, and this young man is really one of the Devondales of Dartmouth."

And Zenobia heard, and answered not a word.

What could she say, when her thoughts were full of that strange interview that still seemed so much more real than anything that was now passing around her; when the scornful words were still ringing in her ears: "Devondale a tutor! A pretty teacher of youth, truly! But he shall teach you no lessons, girl! Be assured of that!"

What right had he to say that? Had he, indeed, any right?

She could not—would not—think it! She would not so far wrong Mr. Devondale as to attach the slightest importance to the insinuations of a stranger. She knew him too well to do that.

Who was this Herbert Lovell that she should believe him? Her father! But she had only his bare word for it, and he had gone away immediately after making the astonishing assertion. Was it likely that it could be true, then? Was it probable that her father—supposing him to be yet living, which she had no reason to do—would return in this strange, secret fashion, declare himself to his daughter, and then—vanish? No; Zenobia could not think it; but the mere recollection that such an assertion had been made was amply sufficient to disturb her mind and shake her faith in the existing order of things.

"He shall teach you no lessons, girl! Be assured of that!"

Must she, then, respect this man's wishes, simply because he asserted that he was her father? Must she refuse—

"So what am I to say to Mrs. Paxton, Zenobia? Would you like to study under this young man, or would you not?"

No; he had no right to dictate to her. Let him prove his assertion first, and then—

"I should like to study with Cecil very much, aunt," she said, with decision; and she raised her head proudly, as though Herbert Lovell were standing there before her, and she dared him to make good his words. "I think I have a great deal yet to learn."

Was she thinking of the English men of letters and their works, or of Herbert Lovell and his mad assertion?

It was not easy to tell; probably she did not even know herself.

It never occurred to Zenobia to question Mrs. Brabourne on the subject. There was never any confidence between them on any point, and the girl would have shrunk with a feeling of something not far removed from fear from putting her vague misgivings into words. For somehow, Herbert Lovell did not strike her as a possible parent to be proud of. A gentleman he was undoubtedly, but a gentleman in an advanced state of decay. Voice and manner showed what his social position must once have been; but, looking on the man, it was not so easy to decide what it might now be. Nor was there anything about him to touch her or appeal to her sympathies. Had he looked ill, or unhappy; had he shown any feeling for her, or pleasure in their meeting, things might—they probably would—have been different; but he being what he was, it could scarcely be wondered at that Zenobia shrank from the idea of having such a father, and seized eagerly on every scrap of evidence that went to disprove his claim.

She would not say one word that might serve to precipitate matters. If he really were her father, it was for him to prove it. She could—and would—do nothing.

Why should she?

It is to be feared Zenobia was not very lively company that evening; but the evenings in Queen Street were apt to be dull, so that no one noticed any particular difference, or felt hurt at her want of sociability. She had plenty to think about, nor were all her thoughts of a depressing character. How could they be, when she remembered that pleasant walk with Mr. Devondale, and all that he had said? And now she would have many more opportunities of listening to him, of hearing his boyish laugh, and learning to know him better.

Zenobia already felt that she knew him well—far too well lightly to distrust him—but she liked him quite enough to wish to know him better. That scornful laugh

notwithstanding—partly, perhaps, in consequence of it—she was convinced that Mr. Devondale was a good, as well as a handsome and attractive, man; and she owned to herself, flushing faintly the while, that she was very glad Mrs. Brabourne approved of Cecil's plan.

"Thanks—for us both!" he had said. How clearly she recalled the tone, and the look—more eloquent even than that tone—that had accompanied the words! It was his wish, then, as much as Cecil's; his plan as much as the boy's. The thought was a gratifying though perplexing one.

Zenobia was beginning to learn that she was young still, and the knowledge thus gained was delightful to her. Even in Slowton it was not possible to exhaust all the experiences of life in nineteen years, more especially if those nineteen years covered the period of long-clothes and rattles: for it is given to few of us to grow old before ever we have been young.

Zenobia's experiences that day had taught her much.

#### CHAPTER VI.

"ZENOBIA! It's a grand name, but it suits you admirably," said Cecil thoughtfully.

Mr. Devondale's eyes said the same; but the handsome tutor was not a privileged person like the boy of fourteen, and he was careful not to take an undue advantage of his position. He was to instruct Zenobia in certain carefully selected works of English men of letters—the selection was his own—and the confidence thus reposed in his sense of honour he was resolved not to abuse. Any instruction she might receive in yet deeper mysteries was given indirectly and without any definite intention on his part. Thus, if Zenobia learnt more than he had undertaken to teach, no one was to blame for it. These things will happen; they are happening every day, with good or bad results, as the case may be; and, in a general way, nobody is to blame for them. Certainly Mr. Devondale was not, for his conscience held him innocent. Else how could he laugh so boyishly and lightly heartedly as he often did?

"Do you really think mine is a pretty name, Cecil?" the girl said doubtfully.

"Pretty? No; I said 'grand,'" he repeated. "I don't think it's pretty at all."

"I don't like it." She spoke with considerable decision.

"Well, it is a little large for everyday use, perhaps," Cecil conceded, as he lay on the sofa, his hands clasped comfortably beneath his head, and looked at her meditatively; "but then, you know, an ordinary commonplace name would not suit you at all."

"Why not? I'm a commonplace girl, and——"

"But that's just what you are not. Is she, Mr. Devondale? You are entirely different from all the Slowton girls, and I'm sure they are commonplace enough. No, no; Zenobia is the name for you. There is something a little cold and stately about it."

"And am I cold and stately? Oh, Cecil!"

"Not now," and he smiled. "But you looked so, you know. I used to watch you sometimes, and you inspired me with a feeling of awe. You remind me of Maud:

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,  
Dead perfection, no more.

And I used to wonder if you'd be too proud to speak to a fellow—an insignificant fellow like me, I mean."

"I wish you'd tried."

"I wish so too—now. But I should never have had the pluck. I believe it must have taken all Devondale's courage to do it," he added mischievously.

Zenobia laughed; she could laugh now; the knowledge of laughter—the practical and personal knowledge—was one of those deeper mysteries that Mr. Devondale had indirectly taught her. She was an apt and creditable pupil, and her laugh was a very sweet and musical one. The tutor raised his head, as he sat writing letters at a distant table, and smiled to hear it. He felt justly proud of his work.

"Why do you laugh?" the boy asked.

"Is it because he showed his inward trepidation too plainly, and you laugh at the recollection?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "To let you into a secret, Cecil"—and she lowered her voice confidentially—"I believe I was a great deal the more frightened of the two. Whatever he felt, Mr. Devondale certainly showed no outward sign of trepidation."

"Neither did you; I'll swear to that. But why on earth were you afraid of Frank? He doesn't look the sort of fellow a girl should be afraid of."

Zenobia glanced at the young man writing so industriously at the further end of the room; his handsome head bent over

the paper, his thoughts apparently absorbed in his task; and a faint smile parted her red lips. No, he did not look the sort of fellow to be afraid of; most assuredly he did not, and she was not afraid of him any longer.

"Devondale a tutor! A pretty teacher of youth, truly!"

The words recurred to her memory suddenly, arresting the smile; but they were powerless to shake her faith in him; they were powerless to do more than slightly ruffle the calm surface of her peace of mind.

For three weeks had passed since those words were spoken, and she knew Mr. Devondale far better now. The experience of those weeks seemed amply to have justified her first instinctive confidence in him, and she liked and trusted him more with every day that slipped happily by. "Like" and "trust" were the words by which she would have defined to herself her feeling towards him; and if that feeling were a somewhat warmer one than such words could ever adequately express, Zenobia was as yet in ignorance of it. Liking and trust were both new to her experience, so that it was scarcely strange that she hardly knew at first what their proper limits might be, or where they merged their own identity in the all-absorbing passion of love.

Three weeks had passed since those words were spoken, and in all that time she had never heard one word from the speaker; had never seen so much as a passing glimpse of him in the street. He had made his strange assertion, and vanished as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up. And Zenobia, happy in the present, vaguely hopeful of the future, felt only too thankful that it should be so.

For Zenobia had been reared amid the respectabilities of Slowton; she had led a guarded life in the decorous calm of Queen Street. True, she had chafed somewhat against the restraining bars of her detested prison-house; the social code under which she had grown up had narrowed her mental horizon and starved her sympathies; but none the less had it formed her opinions, and coloured her views of life. She might dislike and despise the Slowton prejudices, but—whether for good or for evil—they influenced her still, and must ever continue to do so; though probably, as time went on and her experience widened, in a greatly modified degree.

Thus Zenobia could not but view Herbert Lovell with Slowton eyes of dispassionate criticism, and what she had seen was far from pleasing her. He was as far removed from the Slowton standard as Mr. Devondale, but unfortunately in quite the opposite direction. While the one fell short, the other surpassed; and the girl, though capable of appreciating superiority, was not yet able to make allowances for inferiority. That the man who claimed to be her father had fallen below the standard that might and ought to have been his, she felt instinctively; and thus her own instincts and Slowton prejudices combined to render the idea of his possible relationship most distasteful to her. Now, however, she was beginning to feel safe; those three weeks that had elapsed seemed to have put that unpleasant interview very far away from the peaceful, happy present; and Zenobia would soon regard it as little more real than a bad dream.

Her silence, meantime, interested Cecil, who wondered much that she vouchsafed no answer to his gay question; he knew nothing of the changing thoughts that brought such a perplexed look into the girl's beautiful eyes; but he saw that her attention had wandered far away from him, nor did he make any effort to recall it. Cecil, both from temperament and circumstances, was apt to regard the drama of life rather from the spectator's than the actor's standpoint; and he was much given to idle—yet, to himself, not wholly unprofitable—speculations on the probable issues of all that he saw. This "faultily faultless" Zenobia had long been the central figure on the very circumscribed stage that was all the cripple boy knew of the real world around him; and the more he saw of her, the more interested he grew. Mr. Devondale's admiration for her—carefully guarded though it was from the eyes of a curious world—was no secret to him; and he was already constructing a very pretty little romance, in which his two dearest friends were to play the leading parts for his especial benefit. Thus, Cecil was content that her thoughts should wander, since he had ample occupation in wondering what direction they might be taking; and the silence lasted so long that at last Mr. Devondale threw down his pen

and strolled over to the window, professing a fear that they had fallen out about something, and were no longer on speaking terms.

"Why, Frank, it only shows what excellent terms we are on, that we can sit together for five minutes without speaking a word," the boy said lazily, noting the while with much satisfaction that Zenobia's wandering attention had returned from its travels, and the light to her eyes. "Zenobia doesn't bother to talk when she's nothing to say; that is why I find her so restful."

"You are looking tired, my boy. We'll do no more work to-day," Mr. Devondale said with decision.

"Sing something, then. Zenobia will like that, and her time isn't quite up yet."

"If Miss Brabourne wishes it."

Miss Brabourne did wish it, and said as much with her usual grave simplicity. There could be no doubt she enjoyed Mr. Devondale's singing; to be sure of it, he had only to watch the changing expression of her face that reflected constantly the changing feeling of the music.

But, attentive as was the little audience in that firelit room, there was one unseen listener in the rapidly darkening street without, whose attention was even more closely riveted by the wonderful voice of that sweet singer. Yet the feeling with which he heard it scarcely seemed to be in harmony with the music; and when he at length turned away, it was with something very like a muttered oath that he said: "It's he, safe enough, and at his old tricks again! He thwarted me once, but this time he shall not escape me. Sing on, my boy, but you shall sing to another tune before I've done with you!"

And, so saying, he went on his way and disappeared in the darkness of decorous Queen Street.

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.  
(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER IX. GATHERING CLOUDS.

As the whisper of far-off breakers comes up from the summer sea, so ill rumours stole from out the lush green meadows and the shadow-pied hillsides. The breeze in the tree-tops seemed to murmur of sorrow and treachery, and the beating rain took the likeness of the tears of women. Fear and distrust were everywhere, lurking like shadows that play hide-and-seek in corners, darkening the distance, and yet intangible, changeful, uncertain. The pretty rippling rivulets babbled of treason; a bare branch in the hedge, seen in the twilight, took the form of a musket; and every upright stake suggested a pike.

The air was oppressive as that which preludes a thunderstorm, yet the same brooding silence reigned. Words were few; yet men, meeting each other in the street, eyed each other momentarily, then looked away. Mothers, nursing their children, as the gloaming came down like a grey, rose-tinted curtain, hugged them close, and invoked their saints as the men passed out muttering, with lowered heads and set, grinning jaws.

Everywhere a sinister influence made itself felt, though clothed in so few words; and nowhere was the uneasiness deeper than in the ranks, taking that word to mean all the regiments—cavalry, infantry, artillery, and engineers—quartered in County Cork.

The younger officers, as a body, had an

important and inscrutable air, as of war-horses who scented the battle from afar. To all of their kind the faintest hint of seeing anything approaching to active service is as a very glimpse of heaven itself. They thirst for a smell of gun-powder; they yearn to encounter the baptism of fire. They may be carpet knights in piping times of peace, but few of us who have ever heard it can forget the longings, the hopes, the aspirations that rise like the thunder of a crowd at the slightest hint of being called upon to fight for Queen and country. A regiment, under such circumstances, is but as one man. From the Chief to the tiniest drummer-boy, who hopes that the beat of his drum will add to the general din, and help to frighten the enemy, there is but one will, one impulse, one individuality.

There was not much chance of what Lieutenant Blizzard—hoping, perhaps, to perform the dying gladiator in earnest—called "a decent breeze," but a mere shadow of "the pomp and circumstance of war" darkened the air. Chubby was inscrutable; his eyes were round and tight as gooseberries. He seldom spoke above a whisper. "You never know whether any—a-hem!" he would say, and then, with a glance at door or window, three fingers would be laid against his bristling moustache, as if to bar the exit of further imprudences. There can be no doubt he enjoyed himself enormously, and it may be said that at this period of his young existence, his letters home were at once so mysterious and so warlike, that his sisters grew pale in the reading of them, and his father, a most worthy country Rector, would clap his glasses on his nose and say: "Bless my soul! What's all this? What's all this?" Indeed,



such alarming rumours became current in the village that an extra copy of the daily paper was subscribed for at the "Green Beetle," and expectation went, so to say, on tip-toe.

"As I hear, sir," said the ancient gravedigger, leaning on his spade and looking up at the Rector parrot-wise, "there's a sayin' of wars and rumours of wars goin' about, an' happen Master Charles comin' home wi' a cocked hat on 's head."

"Not so fast, Barker, not so fast," replied the Rector, not, however, wholly ill-pleased, and in his heart of hearts thinking his boy a destined hero, and the General's cocked hat only a question of time. So Charles Verrinder, Lieutenant, walked proudly to the imaginary fanfare of the war-trumpets, squaring his already square shoulders, and twirling his moustache to a fierceness hitherto unparalleled. Chubby was proud of his massive proportions; he rejoiced in his squareness. When told that a charming Irish girl had indicated him thus: "No, not that one—I mean the square officer," his satisfaction knew no bounds. Old hands watched Chubby with a quiet, amused glance in the present crisis, and the doctor led him on to heights of diplomacy and suggestion that might well have become a Field-Marshal commanding an invading army. At last came a time when, after a certain hour, the men were ordered to be "confined to barracks." Of all things this is the order most disliked by troops. It interferes with the liberty of the individual, and is felt to be cruelly irksome. All non-commissioned officers know how the men gird against it, and what they will do to evade it. Therefore everyone in authority is peculiarly on the alert, yet not so much so but that one or two delinquents will get the better of the universal vigilance, generally coming to bitter grief, spending a desponding night in the guard-room, and appearing pale and unkempt before the Colonel at Orderly Room next morning.

Drummer Coghlan, preparing to leave hospital and join the ranks again, was seen to grin derisively as he heard of the new order, and a comrade overheard him mutter to himself: "Got ye, me boy, be jabers!" and hoped Jim wasn't going off his head in a fit of "temporal sanity," to which painful suggestion the Hospital Sergeant laconically replied by a gentle yet decisive shake of the head.

Little Missy announced the release of Drummer Coghlan from durance vile with triumph to her family circle. She stood

before them a dainty figure all in cream-colour, wrought about in most cunning and delicate embroidery. This dainty robe encircled her throat, falling thence straight to her ankles, where it spread out like a pigeon's tail, fluted, as feathers fall and fold. It will be seen that Alison was skilful with her needle—since Alison it was who had designed and made the wondrous garment in which Little Missy presented herself to the delighted gaze of her belongings.

"Very presently," said the household idol, her head on one side, her eyes blue and dreamy as a summer's evening sky, "Mr. Drummer will come again. His poor foot has gotted 'pletely mended. He will come to see good Eliza. He loves to see good Eliza."

"Eh?" said the Major, looking up over the page of the "Army and Navy Gazette." "What's this—what's this?"

The mother drew the babbler gently to her side. But it was never any use to try and stifle Missy. All the thoughts that were in that golden head came tripping off the ready tongue.

"It's 'bout little Abednego," she said, looking up fearlessly into the hawk-face that softened to unspeakable tenderness as it looked upon her. "Very presently I shall see little Abednego again. The good drummer will bring him. 'Liza says so. 'Liza knows about things—'deed she does—little Abednego will come, and I shall spread him. He is more gooder than Minnymin"—then with a flash of happy memory Missy ran to the Major's side. "Dad," she said, "there was a sol'jer, you know, once—made himself like Minnymin—he truly did—he jumped up on the wall—and jumped down—so—I told the drummer for a safe secret—he was angry—he was not very good—he said a naughty word—he truly did—and 'Liza said 'Hush!'—it was the night I——"

But here Missy came to an abrupt conclusion. Something warned her that her feet were treading upon dangerous ground. A mighty sigh heaved the cream-coloured gown, and she laid the little snowflake of her hand within Dad's fond, firm clasp.

"I'm not always good—it can't be 'spected, can it? Nobody is always good, is they? Not even the Colonel——"

Audacity could go no further, and Missy looked up from under her silky eyebrows, as who should say: "If I am to be punished for this, please get it over quickly." Alison

thought it well to start another subject promptly, so she said :

"Missy dear, won't you be 'trumpphant' when you get little 'Bednego back again?"

Missy did not quite know where the fault lay, but was uneasily conscious that these big words sometimes got the better of her; so she spread her hand out with a gesture as of a Royal personage who puts aside a remark that irritates.

"Do you know," she said, with her hands folded on her gown, and an engagingly simple expression on her face, "do you know that Shadrach and Meshach are very sad in their little hearts, because I love 'Bednego better than all? They hide their little heads with their tails, and weep bitterly."

Then everybody cried, "Oh, Missy!" for Missy was known to deal in picturesque fables at times.

"Well, if it is a fib, it's a good fib," persisted the child; "'cause they ought to be sorry, if they aren't, you know—it would be rumgacious of them if they didn't care at all—'cause every one wants Missy to love them, don't they now?"

Then they said: "Yes—oh yes—every one did."

"Of course," said Missy; "there, that's all settled," and ran away to play.

But Dad did not laugh. He got up and walked about the room. He was wondering if Missy's story about the man who played at being Minnymin was a "good fib," or a stern reality. He would like to have heard Drummer Coghlan's opinion on the subject, but could not very well ask that worthy.

Watching his grave face, Elsie grew bold to ask a question that had been rising to her lips any time this week past.

"Dad, is there anything wrong?"

"Yes, my dear."

That was all the answer she got, and, getting it, knew she should get no more. Then, softly humming to himself, "When the heart of man is oppressed with care," the Major went out of the room, downstairs, and so out of sight across what was called the inner square.

Alison, after one long look at her cousin, became once more absorbed in "Yeast," trembling as she read of Lancelot's farewell interview with his dying love: that most passionate, sad scene that must be for ever engraven on the memory. How grand, how noble, she thought, was this love that could brave and endure all things; that, "knowing no earthly close," could

still fill the life, the heart, the soul; a love whose very memory must have been more precious than the full fruition of a lesser passion!

"Alison, what are you going to wear to-morrow?"

Elsie's voice broke in upon her reverie.

"To-morrow?" she said, raising her head with a dazed and puzzled look.

"Surely you haven't forgotten we are going to Enderleigh! Why, I have been counting the days for the last fortnight."

"We mustn't stay late," said Alison gravely; "it is choir practice night."

"Well, well, they will do without us for once in a way; and Mrs. Musters can play the organ. The Colour-Sergeant will have to do all the tenor singing, for Captain Dennison is going with us—and Mr. Verrinder."

"He certainly won't be missed," said Alison.

"Oh, how spiteful you are! How can the man help having been born without a voice?"

"He can help coming to choir practice, anyway."

"He carries the books."

"Any one can do that."

"Have it your own way," said Elsie. "La! la-la!" and straightway began to float round the room, light as a leaf before the wind, to the refrain of the last new waltz.

Meanwhile, the object of all this banter was stretched on his barrack-room couch—a long, cane-bottomed settee, with two mildewy-looking cushions at one end—discouraging most eloquently to his friend Blizzard, seated on the corner of the table, nursing one leg and swinging the other.

"It's no use," said Chubby, uttering each sentence between a puff of cigarette smoke. "I really cannot stand the—er—strain of it any longer. You know, my dear fellow, my feelings are only like the feelings of any other fellow. I shall feel better when, in so many plain, square words, I have said to her: 'My life, I love you.'"

"Quite so," said Blizzard calmly; "but the question is, what will she say? and what will the Major say? Chubby, dear boy, you haven't got a rap to marry on—you know that as well as I do."

"Love laughs at——" began Chubby, but the stoic on the table interrupted him.

"I dare say he does; but, unfortunately,

the lady's father also occasionally laughs too."

"Blizzard—you have never loved—you have never gazed——"

"I have never made a fool of myself," said Blizzard scathingly.

"You couldn't, my dear fellow; you were ready made, you know."

"Have it your own way," and a comical glance from the man on the table disarmed the passing irritation of the other.

"Pax, pax," he cried, throwing his arms up over his head, "return we to our starting-point; what am I to do? This state of suspense is killing me—positively killing me. Oh, you may laugh as much as you like, I know that I look all right; but it is within, it is within. Oh, Blizzard, my boy, she's all my fancy painted her, she's lovely, she's divine."

He made figures in the air with his cigarette as though he were limning the fair one's features.

"You may think I sound frivolous, you may imagine my tone of conversation frothy; but I tell you what it is, it's deuced serious, it is indeed; and I don't speak my heart out to other fellows, you know, as I do to you."

"I should hope not, indeed," growled Blizzard; then he went on calmly considering the case, as though he were counsel asked for a dispassionate opinion.

"I don't know how your chance stands with Elsie Henneker; but I expect you have one or two other fellows——"

"Other fellows—what fellows?" ejaculated Chubby, throwing his cigarette viciously into the fireplace.

"Why, there's Green."

"Green—Green—Green of Ours? Oh, Blizzard, my boy, 'On the Grampian Hills my father feed his sheep,'" and Chubby, striking an attitude, gave a charming imitation of Edward Pouncefort Green, Ensign, in the character of young Norval, whose one little weakness as a reciter was that of running half-a-dozen words into one when he wanted to be most expressive.

"Then there's . . . Dennison. . . ."

There was no banter in Mr. Verrinder's demeanour now, as he ran his fingers through his hair, and stared with round eyes at the speaker.

"Draw it mild, Blizzard, draw it mild," he said, speaking as if he were a bit short of breath, and paling under his mask of tan. "I don't mind old Green—nobody would, you know—but—Dennison—whew!—why, it's the other one he's after; it's

Miss Drew, the gentle, soft-eyed cousin, I tell you. . . ."

"Maybe," said Blizzard, still calmly nursing his leg, "maybe. . . . I thought so myself, till——"

"Till what?" roared Chubby.

"Till yesterday."

"This is the very deuce and all," said Chubby. "Can't you speak out, man? Now, out with it, what's about yesterday?"

"It seems a curriish thing to speak about it, Verrinder"—when Blizzard called his friend Verrinder, things were very serious indeed—"makes one feel like—like a cad."

"I say, now——" began Chubby, but Blizzard raised his hand as one who commands silence.

"Let me say what I've got to say—if say I must. I was coming down from Sundays Well yesterday, coming along by the riverside, and at the turn—just by those houses where the gardens run right down to the water's edge—I came face to face with Dennison and the Major's daughter; they were speaking together very earnestly, and she——"

"Well?"

The word came sharp and short as a pistol-shot.

"Was crying. . . ."

Lieutenant Verrinder's next observation was perhaps quite as well smothered in his moustache.

Silence reigned between the two. The same thoughts ran riot in both these honest hearts.

If it had been any one else—any one but Hugh Dennison! The idea of setting yourself up as a rival to Hugh Dennison! The very notion had an amount of cheek in it that savoured of mutiny! Presently Blizzard alid off the table, whistled a soft stave or two, to give some slight relief to his feelings, and then made for the door. As he passed Chubby, he laid his hand a moment with a firm, manly pressure on his friend's shoulder.

"I'm sorry to have had to tell you—what I saw—but—there was no other way."

Chubby sat up as if he had a spring in the middle of his body.

"All right, old fellow, I know you hated to punish me—but—look here. I'm not going to give it up, by Jove! I'm not. It seems so unlikely—that sprightly, gladsome girl—and—Dennison! There may be some explanation—I shall watch

and wait. I'm not one of your sentimental, sighing lovers—it's not my nature to, as the little hymn says—but, Blizzard—I love her past the telling."

The next day was one that seemed sent straight from heaven.

Ireland is cunning in the making of such days; and they are soft and sweet as those that you may pass beside the margin of some fair Italian lake, yet without the enervation of the Southern clime. You feel sure that never, never anywhere were skies so blue, or trees so emerald; never did river glint so silver-bright, or wild flowers blossom with so fresh a bloom.

And Enderaleigh was one of those old-fashioned country seats that are dotted here and there about the southern counties of Ireland, and whose inhabitants are as quaintly charming and as bewitching as themselves. True, here and there, there is a hint at what English folk would call lack of method, and easy-going, lazy content. The gate, maybe, has had a falling out with one of its hinges, and the door-bell that hangs pendent, and ends in a sort of iron tag, is mended at one of its links by a cunning arrangement of twine. But it swings among a delicious tangle of ivy, roses, and jasmine, and it lets people know you are there, to get the sunniest, sweetest welcome in the world; to be half dragged into the midst of a family circle where each one vies with the other as to who shall do you the most honour and minister to you with the most gentle service—so what matters the bit of twine? And who cares that the park gate is just a little awry?

As the sunlight to the moonlight, so is the true Irish hospitality to any hospitality I have ever known in any other of the many countries into which my gipsy feet have wandered.

At Enderaleigh, welcome seemed to be written over every portal in the largest letters. Brave sons and fair daughters met you, greeted you, upon the threshold. Dogs, curious and manifold, rushed to assist in the receiving of the guests, coming down the long avenue to meet you like a pack of very diversified hounds, one tiny terrier always behind the rest, squealing and shrieking with rage that he could not keep his place in the foremost of the fray.

What a glorious drive it was to Enderaleigh from Patrick's Hill! Elsie fancied that her little bay mare, Brownie, had never stepped so lightly.

"I am sure she knows we are going to enjoy ourselves," she said, laughing, as she toolled the car along the green-edged roads, and Missy, clapping her hands, cried "joy ourselves" like an echo.

Alison was quiet as usual; perhaps more so than usual. The young Cornet of Dragoons was at Enderaleigh ready to greet them, and decided that she was more "morne" than usual. He tried to cheer her with stories of a wonderful horse of which he was the owner, and upon which he had come in first at the late regimental steeple-chases. Out of the saddle he was something like a fish out of water. Once enthroned on the pig-skin he was a fine specimen of his kind; hence, he preferred to ride an imaginary horse to none at all. One day the rather straggly Cornet would be an Earl; therefore young ladies listened eagerly to his stories of the hunting-field and the racecourse, exclaiming at the right places, and gasping in due form when he took a "tremendous header, by Jove!" or came "a deuce of a crumpler" over a ditch, a hedge, and a deep drop behind both. What Alison lacked in enthusiasm, Missy made up for. She listened entranced.

"But your horse doesn't jump quite as well as the cow that jumped over the moon, does he?" she said, looking up at the tall young warrior with sweet confiding eyes of heavenly blue. "That was the highest of all."

Indeed, Missy ought to have been at home with good Eliza; but the Leytons of Enderaleigh would not hear of Alison and Elsie coming without her, and so there she was, "trumpphant" indeed, abashed by no one, not even the Cornet of Dragoons who would one day be a live Earl. He was very good and kind to her, after the manner of big horse-soldiers to all things small and helpless. He fetched her some macaroons, and listened attentively to the story of the drummer and little Abednego; but he positively refused to be drawn into any discussion as to the relative merits of his horse Meteor, and the cow whose leap is assuredly the highest on record.

A string band played in the centre of a clump of acacias, and croquet balls made merry tappings as they "kissed" on the velvet sward. All the nicest people in the county were there. Major Henneker had ridden over, and the Colonel brought several Hundred and Ninety-Third men in his drag, Verrinder among the

rest. Blizzard had arrived earlier. Mrs. Musters had refused the invitation because she thought the Hennekers' card had been sent a couple of days sooner than her own; but, as Mr. Green observed to Elsie, her absence prevented their having to listen while she sang "Melancholy Jane," an infliction they had only too often had to endure.

As the shadows lengthened the company repaired to the rambling old house, wandering from room to room as fancy led. The band came out of the acacia clump, and took up its position at the end of a long, low room with a lovely coloured ceiling and a floor of polished oak. Captain Dennison came late, with a cavalry man, a cousin of his, and the two, leaning against the doorway, for a while looked on.

There was Elsie, circling round with Mr. Blizzard, who danced in a sort of fainting style that was much admired; and little Missy floating about like a white-winged bird, delicately piloted by a delightful young Wykehamist home for the holidays—a son of the house, and a kind-hearted public schoolboy, not, however, without dignity; a characteristic that suffered some sense of defeat when his small partner observed, with her sweetest smile: "You are quite a nice boy. I like you very much."

Alison would not dance, though her faithful Cornet tried hard to persuade her; nor was Captain Dennison more successful.

"We really ought to be going home," she said; "it is practice night at the chapel, you know."

"Mrs. Musters will be charmed to take your place, and the Colour-Sergeant will well fill mine," said Dennison; then he added, "he really has a wonderful voice, has he not? Indeed, he is a capital fellow all round, and so popular with the men."

"I can imagine that," said Alison.

"Non-commissioned officers like that are the backbone of a regiment—they are simply invaluable. They get nearer to the men than we do, and know them better than we can just now."

"Just now seems rather an anxious time," said Alison.

That was one of her peculiarities; men would speak to her of things that they would never dream of touching upon to other women.

"Indeed it is," said Dennison. "You may tell that by the Chief's face."

When Verrinder, desperate in his determination to try his chance, even against

the model man of the regiment, sought for Elsie, he could not find her. His quick glance took in the fact that Captain Dennison was now missing also.

"He was talking to Miss Drew a moment ago," said Blizzard anxiously; "and I left Miss Elsie there, in the cosy corner, by Lady Graham."

Now Lady Graham was the wife of one of the cavalry men present, and a most charming person besides; but in Verrinder's eyes the cosy corner was already empty, and not even a most winning smile and bow had power to draw him to its inviting shelter.

A long corridor ran the whole length of Enderleigh, with open arches leading to the garden, and here did Verrinder disconsolate wander. The sky was still opal, with a star glittering palely here and there. Chubby had a mind to write a poem about one of them—something about the unattainable—but he did not know how to begin. There were plenty of pretty girls about. He might have had a dozen partners; but his soul was sad, and loved to dwell apart. Here and there were little cosy rooms opening into the corridor, and into one of these—a sort of Japanese tent—did Verrinder stroll.

At a small table sat Elsie Henneker, her head leaning on her hand, her whole attitude that of emotion of some kind. By her side stood Captain Hugh Dennison. He had evidently just been speaking, and was slowly stroking his heavy moustache, a habit he had when troubled or thoughtful. Neither saw the intruder, who never before in his life had felt so much like one.

Blizzard, standing by to watch the dancers, felt a touch upon his shoulder.

"Come along home," said Chubby, "I'm tired of this."

And in silence the two friends set off through the gloaming.

## BETWEEN THE SEASONS.

BETWEEN the seasons! You might call it between the showers, for that is what it has come to after all the fine summer weather. A deep-toned rumble from the sky has overpowered for an instant the incessant rumble of vehicles in the street, and has given the signal for a general downpour. It is no soft summer shower this, but a whirl of wind and rain rattling the boards outside the railway offices, while the awnings over the shop-

windows flap and flutter like so many sails in the sudden squall. The side-walks crowded just now are in a moment cleared, while knots of pedestrians cluster under archways, invade the portals of big shops, or seek a precarious refuge beneath the flapping awnings.

Under such an awning in Oxford Street a little group of us have taken refuge: a smart American, with a smarter wife; a workman, with his basket of tools; a lawyer's clerk with a bundle of papers, destined probably for the ruination of somebody; and a shambling kind of man, in mixed and seedy garments. The shelter is precarious, for we are all tenants at will of the shopkeeper inside; and next moment a boy rushes forth with a long pole, and presto! our shelter is run up into its receptacle over the shop-window, and we are left unprotected to the pelting of the pitiless storm.

"Shame, Charlie, shame!" cries the shabby man. "I blushes for my country, I does," with an eye to the Americans, who have squeezed themselves into a shallow and splashy doorway. But Jonathan does not respond, and his wife only remarks sotto voce:

"I think it's about time we were getting to home." And a sharp errand-boy who is pelting along harder than the rain, seizes the situation and stops to jeer:

"'Allo, Dossie, you wants a bit for yourself, does you?" Whereat Dossie pursues, and is lost to sight in the driving shower.

Cleared are the upper decks of the omnibuses, but just now crowded with passengers; and now chock-full inside, you may hail their conductors in vain.

"Outside only!" with a sarcastic grin, is the only reception one gets after a dash through the rain, at a vehicle which showed only five heads in a row through the dim, mud-splashed glasses. But the sixth was a young gentleman in knickerbockers. And just before the shower you had only to crook your finger to bring a hansom to the kerb, and now they seem all to have rattled off into space, which is a good fare and no grumbling at the journey's end. Great loaded vans, with black dripping covers, the great horses all dripping and shining too, come charging down the street, that looks almost like a river with its reflected lights from the stormy sky, and its dim images of passing objects.

The storm may soon be over and the

sun may shine again, but not with the blink it had before. That cold and windy shower has broken the summer, of which the weatherwise may now write obituary notices. You hear of Snowdon with a white cap, and of snowstorms among the Mendips. The swallows have disappeared, and as you lie awake at night you may hear, or fancy you hear, the seven whistlers overhead, and the "honk" of the wild geese as they come in flocks from the frozen North. But if you hear nothing of all this, are there not the geese in the poulterers' shops ready plucked and singed from fennish countries beyond seas? As for the Christmas clubs, they begin at midsummer, and the materials for the Christmas pudding are already practically secured, though untoward events may bring down our aspirations from the lordly turkey to the humble brisket of beef.

And if the whirling winds that whistle "in the lum" cause some confusion in the sheltered streets, how is it with the big circus tents in the country, the wild-beast shows with their spread of painted canvas, the swing-boats, and the merry-go-rounds, with the fat lady and the giant, and all the tribe of minor shows? All these come straggling into town from all the country round, or camp out in some sheltered spot in the suburbs. There is a field behind the old "George," at Hounslow, that is filled the winter through with caravans and shows such as would have rejoiced the heart of Christopher Tadpole. Another "gentleman of the name of Smith" does not appear to be so popular with the wandering tribe, who might often give a lesson to their superiors in station, in the homely domestic virtues and the faithful observance of the family bond.

The camps, too, are all struck, and the soldiers have marched into winter quarters. We saw them marching past the other day, bronzed and dusty, the red coats a bit stained with rain and faded with sunshine, but rifles and bayonets bright enough, and the men themselves stepping out under their load of miscellaneous goods with buoyant tread. Here are the Hussars, too, from the battle-fields of the Wiltshire downs, men and horses a little roughened but hardened by the outdoor life, the men riding at their ease, smoking, laughing, talking, with the abandon of old campaigners.

But while half of our friends are coming home, another part are going away; the

parliamentary division pale, limp, and exhausted, with views for German baths, where the "Kaiser Hof" has put up its shutters, and the doctors and the bath-masters are thinking of taking their little holiday, or for cheerless Italian towns, which between the seasons are neither one thing nor the other. For such the best wish is a speedy return to the country house with its glowing hearths, to the woodlands, bare as they may be, to the wheaten stubble and the frequent gun. Happier are we, who, like the paternal collier of John Leech's happy sketch, have had our holiday fight and "come whoam."

Our American friends have taken the hint of the squally autumn showers. They are hurrying away, or are already gone. The hotels they frequent are encumbered with piles of baggage; the halls and porticoes are thinned of their gossiping crowds; huge wraps and waterproofs have replaced the dainty Parisian costumes. The cabs are waiting in files, the railway omnibus groans under the heavy boxes that are thumped upon its roof; and at the railway stations, among fluttering announcements of "last trips of the season," are bills detailing the arrangements for "checking baggage" for the Liverpool boats.

Yet the summer dies hard, and there are odd days exceeding in beauty and freshness any others of the year. What golden sunshine, what glorious sunsets, and how bright are the colours of the fading year! The music of the hounds among the woodlands, the sight of a pheasant rocketing in a blaze of splendour, of the busy squirrel whose russet coat is a match to the fading leaves, the pretty song of the robin that in suburban gardens carols his sweetest; these are among the pleasant sights and sounds for which our 'twixt season period has a specialty.

And about our coasts there hangs at this period of the year a veil of uncertainty that gives a wild, pathetic interest to the mysteries of the deep. Now it is a boat that drifts in with the tide, filled with strange, haggard-looking men; their ship has foundered in the night, and it is an unknown land to them to which they steer out of the gloom. Or what a black and desolate-looking object is the blackened spar which is tossed about by the breakers, and that tells of some ship which has been lost on the treacherous sands; and what a brave sight is the coming in of the

fishing-smacks, as they dash through the surf, and bring up safe under the harbour pier!

And now that his "fly" or his chaise is not so much in demand, the Jehu of the Marine Parade takes to other occupations with his faithful horse; he carts fish, perhaps, or coal. But the paradise of the East country flyman is Newmarket Heath when the great autumn handicaps are at hand. The London cabman takes his outing to Goodwood, and perhaps to Ascot; and Doncaster brings together squadrons of horses and vehicles from the gay watering-places on the eastern coast. But the East Anglian reserves himself for autumn and Newmarket; and over flats and by fenny reaches he jogs along with horse and fly, till Newmarket Heath appears in sight; and then to ply from morn till dewy eve between town and heath, and at night to sleep in his cab and dream that he has picked out a winner.

The racing men, indeed, have cut short their 'twixt season time to a minimum. When the legitimate business ends, there are steeple-chases and hurdle-races to carry on the game, and one or the other serves equally well for "getting a bit" out of the sanguine and speculative public.

The cricketer is more to be consoled with, that is unless he should happen to be a football player also, when he may reap a double harvest. There is something melancholy in the appearance of a cricketer out of season. But a little while ago the observed of all observers, and now of no more account than an old shoe; while the talk about his ears surges with tales of backs and half-backs, of dribblings and brilliant passing, in which he has no concern. As for the rowing man, the frost that affects him is one that lasts all the year round; that is for the professional, who is to be seen swinging to and fro in his frail skiff in the very heart of the dismal season. For the University oar the season is just beginning, and Cam and Isis will soon echo the measured beat of oars, and the champions of the coming year will prove their mettle on the chill and misty waters.

And while Colleges and Halls are awakening from the trance of the long vacation, and all the boys' and girls' schools throughout the land are already again in full buzz, another class of students comes together, with more joviality and high spirits than you might expect, considering the nature of their studies. The medical

student has perhaps altered a good deal since the days when Bob Sawyer gave his little party in Lant Street, Boro'. And the loud, raffish, and extremely dissipated youth who figures in the early pages of "Punch" is not a creature of our times. Still, the "medical" is not always an ascetic votary of science. A good deal of the old Adam lingers in his constitution, and this comes out in the friction of the happy moment, when he first meets in the lecture theatre the stirring, noisy crowd of his fellow-students. There is no 'twixt season, indeed, for the hospitals, but there is a quietness and dulness in the silent wards, as the routine visits go on unaccompanied by the clusters of eager, vivacious students; and nurses, and patients who mostly relish a gallery for the exhibition of their bad places, are not a little brightened up by the return of the student swarm.

And now the members of "the profession," too, are coming back from their holidays, which they have perhaps employed like the cabman, in plying for hire elsewhere. That squall of wind and rain has helped to fill the theatres. First nights, too, are crowded and brilliant, although theoretically nobody is yet in town. Nor is the Row entirely deserted, and among the dying leaves tall horses canter with their fair burdens, while yet the milkman is upon his morning round. As for the dairyman, indeed, he is always there; has he not just put up the price of milk "in consequence of the drought"? And the baker finds his library of weekly books once more getting into general circulation. The cat's-meat man, too, reports a general resumption of activity among his customary clients. The favoured pussie who has accompanied his young mistresses to the seaside has returned, his appetite sharpened by a period of abstinence from his favourite food, while his friend Grimaldin, who spent the recess at the Cats' Home, is also standing expectant at the area gate.

And with the still and silent days, when everything tells of soft decay, our friend the fog slips up from the country, wreathes himself in strange fantastic forms about streets, and parks, and slums. There are wicked winter fogs, for the parentage of which London itself may be responsible, but yon autumnal fog generally comes up from the country white and clean, and gives the sober town a fairy-like touch of beauty. Is it nothing to be among the clouds and listen to the strange, weird

sounds of the invisible world?—sounds which include a good deal of swearing, it must be confessed, from the cherubs who sit aloft on omnibuses and loaded drays. There are darker fogs, too, which throw a dim, mysterious veil over the city, with visions here and there of strange portentous blackness, but these have not as yet come back to town.

But as the muffin-bell sounds its melancholy knell, and the first fire of the season crackles on the hearth, but lately occupied with chilly ferns and bunches of prickly teasels, there is the feeling in the air that winter will be soon upon us, and that the work of the year is done. The harvest is gathered, be it rich or scanty. "Adieu paniers, vendanges sont faites." And we have only now to look forward to another year's vintage.

## OLD JONES.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

IN the verse of two immortal poets, Dante and Tennyson, it is set forth that "sorrow's crown of sorrow" is placed on the brow of him who calls to mind, in wretchedness, the happy hours of the past. It is a wonder that no optimist bard has ever polished a rival couplet to demonstrate what a spring of joy may be tapped by remembering in circumstances of average welfare, the moments of trial and trouble the most fortunate may recall in looking back. Youth, we are often informed, is the season of our greatest happiness; yet somehow youth, if it be critically examined, will in most cases be found to furnish a large proportion of our bad quarters of an hour.

Of all the horrors of this vastly over-rated period of our life, I fancy there is none to match the memory of that first plunge into school-life. I was a home-bred boy, and a little delicate in health as well, consequently my experience of this epoch produced in me a heart-sinking and desolation such as few of the pampered schoolboys of these latter days are ever likely to know. I was sent to a large and rather rough country grammar-school. I arrived a day after the beginning of term, on a dull January afternoon, and the day's work was over when I emerged from the matron's room into the gaunt, chilly entrance-hall. I shudder even now in remembering how cold, and hard, and unsympathetic it all seemed. The door of the big school-room



was open, and through this I could see the faint glimmer of a candle, so thither accordingly I turned my steps in the hope of being able at least to find a place where I might sit down and nurse my woe till tea-time. I could hear shouting and laughter in the playing-field outside, but I had no desire to present myself there just yet. On entering the school-room I found that the light which had attracted me was not fixed, but a sort of "ignis fatuus" bobbing about at the remote end of the room, and exhibiting, with deep shadows between, the hard, bare rows of desks, at one of which I was destined to sit for the next four or five years, and imbibe the elements of the humanities, and of the first four rules of arithmetic.

Gradually the light came nearer and nearer, and after a bit I could distinguish that it was carried by a heavy-shouldered, ungainly youth of sixteen or thereabouts. His face, which was more than merely plain, was already garnished with the rudiments of unmistakeable whippers and moustache, and his head was covered with a mass of closely-curling thick brown hair. As he passed from desk to desk he filled up the inkstands from a pewter jug; and when he came opposite to the place where I was sitting, he stopped, and in a croaking, muffled voice said he supposed I was the new boy.

I replied that I was, feeling at the same time rather uncertain as to the status of my companion. The cut of his clothes proclaimed him to be a schoolboy, yet I could hardly fancy a schoolboy pottering about indoors filling up inkstands, while he might be playing hockey or football outside.

"You're Simpson, aren't you?" he went on. "Ah, I thought you were. You're to be in my dormitory, and you'll have the bed next but one to the window; but Jackson major is leaving at the end of this term, and then you'd better get his, for you'll find yours rather draughty."

So my companion was a schoolboy after all, and I found him, moreover, to be one well posted in certain details of great interest to me. He told me in what form I should probably be put, and the work I would have to do; and the special weaknesses of Spencer the form master; and the valuable information that on Fridays, when Lyall took morning preparation, one might safely be half an hour late. There were certain fellows in my form, he went on to say, who would certainly approach me on

the subject of pecuniary advances, and with some of these it would be unwise to treat. He was just on the point of naming them when the bell rang, and off he clattered with his pewter jug to fill up the remaining inkstands so that he might not be late for tea.

His name, as I soon learned, was Old Jones. Why "Old Jones" I could not at once determine, seeing that he stood described on the school lists as "Jones ml." Thus his very style was an anomaly, but it was a very trifling one compared with his general position in King Henry's School. To begin with, he apparently did no lessons to speak of. While we were in school, or at preparation, Old Jones would be replenishing the ink-pots, or seeing that the black-boards were cleansed of their yesterday's diagrams and comments, or putting coke on the fire, or scratching out blots from the first and second-form exercise books. It was a high crime and misdemeanour to be caught in the dormitories in the daytime, but Old Jones went all over the place at any hour unrebuked. It must not be supposed, however, that he had no status in the school. In reality he enjoyed the special and remarkable honour of having a form all to himself, as he was the sole occupant of an abnormal subdivision known as the "modern remove," it having been proved by experiment that his brain, a remarkable one in many ways, was utterly incapable of taking in knowledge by the normal methods of teaching. What the curriculum of the "modern remove" was, no one ever knew; and why Old Jones was ever sent to King Henry's School, or why, being such an one as he was, he was suffered to remain there, are questions which will be difficult to answer in these days of competitive entrance and superannuation. Some there were who maintained that his father, who was a crossing-sweeper, but at the same time a man of high notions, was anxious that his son should, at any rate, be able to say, in after life, that he had been educated at a public school, and paid double fees for everything, in consideration of his own unsavoury calling, and of the impenetrability of his son's brain to the light of knowledge. Others declared that Jones père was a money-lender, and that he paid nothing at all, on account of a certain hold he had over the Doctor—a hold which had its origin in certain transactions on stamped paper in bygone Cambridge days. A third set—and these probably

came the nearest to the actual facts—held that Old Jones was sent to King Henry's School because his parents or guardians wanted to be rid of him, and that he was allowed to stay on in his anomalous position by the ruling powers because, if he had gone away, it would have been necessary to engage another servant to do the semi-menial tasks in which he apparently delighted. Of the whole school Old Jones was probably the only one who was never in a coinless condition. Whatever the position of his governor may have been, it was certainly one which allowed him to be liberal in the way of pocket-money. Apparently Old Jones had not many pleasures; but he certainly enjoyed himself on half-holidays, when he would take his stand, with the air of a capitalist, by the confectioner's barrow, and regale himself royally with tarts and ginger-beer, and, to his credit be it said, often stand treat to any improvident ones who might be hovering round with hungry eyes and empty pockets. One day an all-but-forgotten uncle came to see me, and, when we parted, I found in my hand an undreamt-of and unprecedented tip of two pounds. Before ten minutes had passed I was negotiating with Old Jones to change one of my golden sovereigns, and in the pride of wealth I could not resist the temptation of letting him know the full extent of my riches. He was himself too much of a plutocrat to show anything like astonishment at the amount of my assets; but, as the event will show, he must have turned the matter over in his mind, for in the course of the next day he made me a proposal that he should take charge of my wealth, and allow me two shillings a week as long as it might last. This negotiation took place at the beginning of my second term, when the shades of the prison-house had already obscured the brightness of my faith in the integrity of the "growing boy," on account of certain loans I had made to Billings minor, who, I am bound to say, was one of those to whom Old Jones had advised me to turn a deaf ear—loans which had been unblushingly repudiated.

"You'd better let me have it," he went on. "I've got about ten pounds to keep for the little chaps already; and, let's see, your locker is in the third desk, isn't it? There are lots of keys about that will open these lockers. Mine's got a patent lever I bought and put on myself, and nobody but a clever-burglar could pick it."

I listened to Old Jones's proposition, and said I would think about it; but I was unmoved by his arguments, and resolved to be my own banker, not so much from suspicions as to his solvency or integrity as from my keen desire to become the possessor of a model steamboat, working with a spirit-lamp and real steam, which I had seen in a shop-window in the town. I had my own way, and paid for my whistle—pretty smartly. Three-fourths of my money went in the purchase of it, and after three trials the steamboat broke down in her engine-room, priming and leaking as if she had been a first-class battle-ship of contemporary build. Looking back, I know well enough that I repented of my folly in not having put myself under Old Jones's care, but at the time I am sure I would never have confessed so much, even in those bitter moments when the vessel, after having consumed four-pennyworth of spirits of wine, lay an inert log on the surface of the water-butt.

In spite of the queer stories about him, and his uncouth exterior, Old Jones was not unpopular. He was neither a cad nor a sneak, and amongst schoolboys a negative virtue such as this makes strongly for righteousness. It is true no one feared or greatly respected him, but, on the other hand, no one bullied him. It was a sort of unwritten law that Old Jones was to be let alone, though there were very few in the school who might not have gone for him with impunity. In his banking transactions with the smaller boys he was strictly just. Why he should have undertaken such a troublesome task I could never satisfactorily determine. Was it from pure philanthropy, or was it—I speak now by the light of subsequent experience—that the spirit of commercialism was already moving within him, and that he was in truth financing with his current balances that confectioner's barrow out of which Mrs. Griffiths realised such exorbitant and unholy profits? Another point in his favour was that he received from home hampers of more than average excellence, and at the advent of these his popularity would rise appreciably. There was, too, another season which never failed to bring to him the joy of triumph—triumph of a more exalted nature. Once a week—on Saturday mornings—certain forms were combined for the exercise of mental arithmetic, and here, in spite of his deficiencies in other branches, Old Jones was easily our master. Before any one else had

determined the relations between moldores and Spanish doubloons, or melted ounces Troy into pennyweights, or pounds into pence, that strangely-ordered brain of his would have torn the conclusion from the premises, and he would blurt out the answer, nearly always correct. It was, indeed, a case of Old Jones first and the rest nowhere.

Of course he always got the mental arithmetic prize, and when he went up to receive it at the end of term, he was always greeted by ringing cheers of congratulation; but I think in the evening the cheers were louder when, just before the choir concert began, he came upon the stage to arrange the music on the piano, and to light the candles, for these duties, of course, were well within Old Jones's province.

In the middle of a certain term Old Jones disappeared. He was summoned out of morning school to see some one who had called for him; and, when lessons were done, we emerged into an universe which was, for us, Old Jones-less. For a week our little world was busied with speculation as to his new surroundings; whether he had gone into the bill-discounting business on his own account, or whether he took turn and turn about with his progenitor in the cure of some lucrative West End crossing. Whatever his destiny, his departure served to illustrate the maxim that no man, be he ever so great, is indispensable. Germany, we notice, is still ruled, though its great maker has retired to care for his forests and cultivate his garden; and, in the same way, at King Henry's School the ink-pots were filled, the blackboards kept in order, and the exercise book maculations removed, after the retirement of Old Jones, though by other and hireling hands.

Not long ago, at a time when there was considerable agitation in financial circles, especially in those which centre in Colonial banking ventures, I went up to the City with the view of transferring to my own strong-box a deposit which had just fallen due at the Bank of Oceana. I did my best to make it appear to the accountant that I, at least, was not swayed by the panic which was abroad, that I was simply withdrawing my money in ordinary course, but I fear my acting was not very artistic. We had got through the preliminary formalities when there arose a question which made it necessary that I should see the manager, so I betook myself to his

room on the first floor. I knocked; a voice told me to enter. I opened the door and advanced into the middle of the room without catching sight of the manager, but I saw that his desk stood in a narrow recess to the left. As I moved onward there came into view a squat, hunchy figure, standing with his back to me and filling up the big pewter office inkstand from a stone bottle. The frost of time had passed over the frizzly mass of hair, and huge whiskers and a beard, also frizzled, completed the frame. Had the sight before me been presented to my gaze in Bokhara, or in Bagdad, or in Buenos Ayres, I should have been equally certain that I was standing in the presence of Old Jones.

He did not seem to recollect my face, and under the circumstances I did not care to make myself known to him. There rose in my mind the remembrance of that long-past suggestion of the financier before me to take charge of that sum of money I spent to such little purpose on my mechanical steamboat, and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth when I began to mutter my notice of withdrawal. Perhaps, I reflected, if I take my money out of his bank I shall figuratively buy another mechanical steamboat, more ruinous than the last; perhaps there is fate in this strange meeting, and her hand has written it in her book that, sooner or later, Old Jones must act as the guardian of my savings. Be that as it may, the fact remains that when I left the bank I took with me a new deposit receipt in lieu of my cash, and I have good hope that, in spite of the financial earthquakes which too often convulse our younger Englands, Old Jones will pay me my interest regularly; and, when the term shall have run out, will hand me over my capital unimpaired according to his bond.

#### THE POETIC DRAMA AT DALY'S THEATRE.

ALL travellers of large experience agree upon one particular point, however much they may differ on other matters. It is universally admitted that, after all, all great cities are very much alike. In details, of course, they will differ—details shaped mainly by climatic influences, and to some extent by the racial peculiarities of the people, although these, in this epoch of going to and fro and up and down, are rapidly losing their distinctiveness and

individuality. Everywhere the outdoor life of one great city is becoming more and more like that of every one of its sisters. There are the same restaurants, in which the same sort of cookery and the same brands of wines are served up in precisely the same style; the same shops, where the same goods are on sale; the same operas, very often with the same singers, are to be heard everywhere; the same prints are in the shop-windows; the same fashions exercise the same dominion. The Latin poet tells us that if we travel beyond the sea we change only our sky and not our soul. In these days of cosmopolitanism we carry with us not only our souls, but most of our surroundings as well.

No two cities that I know have been brought more closely into touch by the conditions of the life of to-day than London and New York. The Empire of the Third Napoleon, whatever may have been its faults, succeeded in making Paris one of the pleasantest cities in the world for the pleasure-seeking visitor, and, for a long time, it was the central point of attraction for the travelling 'Americans who had plenty of money to spend, and desired nothing so much as to have "a good time." London, the unimproved London of those days, they came to look at, but not to stay in. There was a lamentable dearth of good hotels and restaurants; except for theatres and concerts there was little amusement to be got; as compared with Paris, it was, it must be confessed, rather a dreary place. But, with the fall of the Empire and the substitution for its magnificence and display of the rather shabby and certainly untidy rule of a struggling Republic, there was a wonderful change. Somehow or other a great wave of improvement seemed to pass over London at just about that time, and it did not take long for the American traveller to find out that—except in the season of fogs, when, as a rule, he was back under the clear skies of his native country—the English capital was quite as good a place for him as any of the continental cities, with the additional advantage that there was no troublesome question of language to consider. Then came the competition among the steamship companies and builders, and the reduction of the Atlantic voyage to something under a week, and in a very little time London became the fashion with Americans, and English travellers began to discover that New York was easily accessible from Liverpool; that there

was no longer any more fear of bowie-knives and six-shooters on Broadway than there is in Oxford Street; and that most of the Transatlantic bogies, in the belief in which they had been brought up, had long ago been trampled under foot by the march of advancing civilisation and culture, or had taken themselves off to a mysterious and little understood region generally described as "out west." From that day life in the two cities has tended more and more to assimilate, and there is now, at certain times of the year, only the smallest perceptible difference between Northumberland Avenue and Madison Square; between Piccadilly and Fifth Avenue; between Cheapside, Cornhill, the Strand, Oxford Street, or Regent Street, and that extraordinary Broadway which in some respects resembles all of them, with a dash of Tottenham Court Road thrown in.

In matters theatrical, of course, the cosmopolitan intercourse has been especially active. All English actors of distinction—and some of none—gravitate naturally to America; all American stars in time find their way to London; the dramatists of the one country find a ready market for their goods in the other; managers on either side of the Atlantic are always on the lookout for any success on the other which shows any likelihood of standing the ordeal of the journey. Mr. Augustin Daly is as well known in London as a manager as Mr. Henry Irving in New York as an actor.

Under all these circumstances, and also considering that our principal writers are at least as much read in America as in England, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that Mr. Daly should have been fired with the ambition to introduce such a play as Lord Tennyson's "Foresters" to a New York audience, even before any manager in the poet's own country had had the courage to show it the footlights; or that he should have built himself a theatre in Leicester Square as a home for his company when, from time to time, a change of theatrical air is considered advisable for them.

Daly's Theatre in London is a charming and comfortable building, and quite an acquisition to the rapidly growing ranks of our playhouses, and Mr. Daly's famous company of comedians, with the incomparable Ada Rehan at their head, may be trusted to hold their own even in the fierce competition of London. But it is not so much of theatre or company that I want to say a few words, as of Lord

Tennyson's play; and not so much of Lord Tennyson's play, as of the rather embittered discussion which some of the critics have been carrying on of late as to the past, the present, and the future of the poor drama, which has been, from a time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, in such a terribly bad way, but which still seems to have so marvellous a vitality under all its trials.

In the first place, then, if, in a theatrical performance, "the play's the thing," "The Foresters" is altogether and hopelessly unfitted for the stage. It is, in fact, not a play at all. It has practically no plot, no action, no interest, no characters. It cannot be said to represent the poetic drama, for it is not dramatic. It is called a pastoral comedy, but, alas! it is anything but humorous. Lord Tennyson's "three lank retainers," and "three merry beggars," and "three false friars," his everyday soubrette, and his conventional Friar Tuck, may be amusing to read about—although I am afraid I did not find them so—but on the stage they are barely endurable. Sometimes—and, indeed, at frequent intervals—the play even ceases to be poetic, and descends into the merest baldness and commonplace. Everything that could be done for the piece was done. Sir Arthur Sullivan has supplied some delightful music; Mr. Daly has put it on the stage with taste and liberality; whatever can be made of the invertebrate parts of Robin Hood and Maid Marian—the other characters hardly pretend to be more than the merest sketches—is made of them by Mr. Arthur Bouchier (wonderfully improved of late) and that most fascinating of the comedy actresses of our time, Miss Ada Rehan. But it is all of no avail. "The Foresters" is not fitted for the stage, and can never have any success there, except such as may accrue to it out of respect for the genius whose work it is. And the majority of the professional dramatic critics were of this way of thinking, I am convinced. But they did not say so. A more adroit "get-out" than the general critical body managed to make of it I have not, in a very long experience, often seen. Plenty of quotations, various graphic accounts of the tolerably well-known story of Robin Hood, vague generalities, and expressions of admiration at Miss Rehan's poetic and picturesque appearance, did duty for any real attempts at criticism. But it was easy enough to read between the lines of even the most cautious notices, all the same.

Homer sometimes nods, and Lord Tennyson, great man as he was, occasionally made mistakes. And the greatest mistake he ever made was in conceiving himself to be a dramatist. I am not forgetting "Becket." In "Becket" there are three strongly interesting characters, which to a great extent compensate for the lack of dramatic interest; in Becket himself Mr. Henry Irving was able to elaborate one of his most effective studies; the play lent itself readily to the pomp and circumstance which have more than once persuaded Lyceum audiences against their better judgement. Nor do I forget "The Cup," the most interesting—indeed the only—story of them all, which was so superbly played by Mr. Irving, Miss Terry, and Mr. Terriss that its defects, from the dramatic point of view, were hardly permitted to show themselves, and were almost entirely overlooked by the audience.

But what I want to know is plainly this. Is "The Foresters" supposed to represent the sort of thing that is to revive the falling fortunes of the British Drama? Is it, in fact, a fair specimen of that "poetic drama" for which so many critics and writers of essays on theatrical matters clamour so eagerly from time to time? Is it at all likely that managers will, to please this particular clique of critics and essayists, make any serious attempt to establish this class of entertainment on a permanent footing? Because, if they do—although, no doubt, I shall be accused of the flattest Philistinism for saying so—it is certain that the holders of shares in music-hall property will promptly find the value of their property increasing by leaps and bounds, and the final triumph and apotheosis of the variety show will be very close indeed at hand.

The first, the second, and the third requisites for a successful play—for a play, that is, which is to appeal successfully to a mixed audience—is that it shall be dramatic; that it shall tell, in fact, such story as it has to tell in the way best suited to convey it sharply and quickly to the audience, within such limits of construction as are set by the exigencies of the stage, and through means of language as plain and simple as a due respect for the claims of literary style demands. It is not enough to put a poem in dialogue form, to divide it into acts, to sprinkle it with stage directions, and to provide it with a list of dramatic personæ. All this may afford a pleasing variety for the reader of a book

of poems, but it does not make a play. You must be dramatist first and poet afterwards, if you want to make any hand of the poetic drama. The great poet dramatists owed their greatness to this very fact, and it is further proved to demonstration by the circumstance that the most dramatic of them all—the practical stage man-of-all-work, Shakespeare—is the only one of them who holds the theatre to this day. As poets, some other of the Elizabethan dramatists came very near him; equalled him, indeed, not infrequently; but he was a writer of plays who thoroughly understood his medium, and they were not. In that little nutshell lies the whole history of the poetic drama, its inability for any length of time to maintain its position with mixed audiences, its unsuitability to the requirements of prosaic times such as these, its practical deposition from its place among theatrical entertainments. It is a pity. Even an inferior kind of poetic drama is infinitely superior in every conceivable way to the machine-made melodramas, the foolish farcical comedies, the claptrap plays, which dominate the situation nowadays. The worst Tennyson is better, if only because it is less injurious, than the best Ibsen—infinately, unspeakably, better than any of the disagreeable Norwegian's imitators. I think, on the whole, it would be better for the world in general if it could be brought to take more interest in such simple greenwood idyls as "The Foresters," than in the unpleasant plays "with a purpose," whose art cannot conceal the nastiness of the subjects with which they deal. But for the present that is clearly not to be. The "woman with a past" is, just now, queen of the boards, and the public discussion of the most painful social questions before and by young girls, the purity of the mirror of whose minds ought not to be smirched even by the breath of such things, is accepted as if it were the most desirable thing in the world. The world gets coarser, and harder, and more callous every day, and this view of mine is, I am very well aware, quite out of the fashion just now. But I have lived long enough to know that the popular view of such things is not always the right one; that it can, like the American orator's politics, be changed; and that, as a matter of fact, it always does change—and that with a surprising rapidity and completeness sometimes, too. But because it is a pity, it is of no earthly use pretending not to see the

most obvious facts. The policy of the dramatic ostrich cannot avail anybody anything.

And Lord Tennyson's failure as a dramatist—for I suppose it may be confessed that, as a dramatist, he was, at all events, not a success—affords a curious commentary on that singular theory of one of our leading dramatic critics, perhaps on things in general the most clear-headed among them, who not long ago promulgated the amazing theory that anybody who could write anything else could write a play. In the pages of one of the monthly magazines this writer invited all the novelists, and some of the essayists, into the dramatic arena, promising them success and fame almost as a matter of course. Mr. Barrie was, I think, the only one to respond, and certainly, hand-in-hand with Mr. Toole, achieved success of a sort—the success, at all events, of a long run—even if he did not add much to the well-earned reputation of the author of "A Window in Thrums."

But facts are all against Mr. Archer's theory. The number of men distinguished in other walks of literature who have also achieved distinction as dramatists is a small one indeed. It may not be absolutely necessary that a playwright should be a person of remarkable general intellectual attainments—some very fair plays have been written by people who could hardly even be accused of cleverness in other matters—but for success on the stage you must have one special form of ability. You must know how to write a play. You must know what can and what cannot be done on the stage; you must know what will travel across the footlights, and what will sink, dried up and withered by their heat, before it gets to the audience; above all, you must know and understand audiences themselves, and study what they will accept, and learn in what form they will accept it best. Without these qualifications, and accurate knowledge on the infinite number of minor points which go to the making of a dramatist, you might be a Tennyson, a Dickens, a Thackeray, a Matthew Arnold, a Carlyle, all rolled into one, and yet be the feeblest even of journeymen playwrights. Robert Browning described himself as a "writer of plays," but even he, although some of his work in dramatic form has great vigour and power, was not a dramatist.

It is altogether one of the strangest, as it is one of the most deep-seated, of the

fallacies of this time, this preposterous idea that anybody who has any literary ability can write a play. The fact that the English writers of plays of this period who have any claim whatever to be called dramatists, in the real sense of the word, can be counted exactly on the fingers of one hand, and are all men who have made that particular form of literary work the chief study and labour of their lives, ought to be sufficient without any further argument to prove its falsity.

## A NEW COLONY.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE second part of the book\* deals exclusively with Mashunaland.

In 1889, Selous was asked by Mr. Frank Johnson to conduct a gold prospecting party up to the head of the Mazoe river—a branch of the Zambesi—in Eastern Mashunaland. The party consisted of Mr. Burnett, Mr. Thomas, an experienced miner, and Selous, whose duty was simply to act as guide to the expedition. The start was made from Quillimani on a small river named the Quaqua, and a little way above the mouth of the Zambesi. Up this river they were to go as far as they could, and then obtain carriers across to the Zambesi. At Quillimani they engaged sixty natives, one, by name Rebecca, being supposed to be able to speak English, but his vocabulary proved to be somewhat limited, containing, indeed, but two words, "Yes, sir." In three days the end of the journey on the Quaqua was reached, and two days more took the party to Mazaro on the Zambesi. Hiring a fresh boat and crew the party started on the twenty-seventh of July up the Zambesi, proceeding but slowly, by reason of the strong current, and the difficulty of finding the correct channel; indeed, Selous formed a very bad opinion of the facilities for navigation afforded by the Lower Zambesi in the dry season. On they went as far as Tete, where a week was spent in collecting carriers, forty-two of whom were eventually got together, but evidently they did not like the job. News of a war in the district below the Mazoe induced Selous to alter his original plan, and to determine to try and make for the head of the Lufa, a tributary of the Mazoe. On

the eighteenth of August a start was made, and good progress was made until on the first of September Selous found that twenty-nine out of the forty-two carriers had deserted in the night, and great difficulty was experienced in procuring men to take their places, the chiefs being avaricious and demanding exorbitant payment for the men. One, Maziwa, demanded ten yards of calico per man for carrying the loads twenty miles, and in addition a large present for himself. So Selous, to the disgust of the natives, destroyed part of the goods, and repacked the remainder into the number of packages which suited the remainder of his carriers, but even his remaining carriers refused to proceed when they saw how angry the villagers were at this treatment. So they were dismissed too, and by still further reducing the number of packages Selous was able to hire a few porters to carry them as far as Kandaya, and from thence proceeded to Inyoti, the village of Mapondera, where the party found an enterprising Indian trading gold-dust. From Mapondera Selous got what he wanted, namely, a mineral concession and his signature to a paper to the effect that "they were entirely independent, and had never paid tribute either directly to the Portuguese Government, or indirectly to any Capitão Mor, holding office under the Portuguese Government; and further, that they had never yet seen a white Portuguese, the only white men they had ever seen being Englishmen coming from the west—Mr. Walter Montagu Kerr in 1884, and Mr. Cherry, a short time before my visit, in 1889." This settled the business of the little expedition, and Selous, after exploring the source of the Mazoe, visited Mount Hampden, which formed a most excellent landmark, and journeyed back down the Mazoe towards the Zambesi. On the way down he shot some hippopotami. "One of the hippos, an immense bull, was very cunning, and would not show his head at all, but only just raised his great broad snout above the surface to breathe. I got upon a mass of rocks well above the water, and when he next executed this manoeuvre put a bullet in his nose. On this he withdrew his nose very quickly, and by the commotion he made beneath the water it was evident that he was very much disturbed; and he must have been in a fury, for he very soon appeared on the surface, showing his whole head and shoulders, and dragging up from the bottom one of his dead fellows, which he

\* "Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa," by Frederick Courteney Selous, C.M.Z.S. (Rowland Ward & Co.)

held firmly in his jaws by the hind-leg. Burnett and I at once saluted him with two bullets, which both hit him and caused him to disappear. He almost immediately came up again, however, still holding the dead hippo firmly by the hind-leg. Again we gave him two bullets in the head, quickly followed by two more, as he was floundering about in his death struggles, when both animals sank together, the one as dead as the other."

On reaching Tete Selous called upon the Governor, who demanded the paper received from Mapondera. This Selous refused to give up, saying that it was signed by a chief far beyond Portuguese territory; whereupon the Governor threatened to have him arrested and sent to Mozambique. Eventually Selous gave him a copy. After this Selous saw that the Portuguese were making strenuous efforts to establish a claim to Mashunaland, and that, if it were to remain British territory, it ought to be taken possession of during the coming year. It had previously in 1888 been declared within the sphere of British influence by Lord Salisbury. Selous, who had a firm belief in the suitability of Mashunaland for colonisation, was urgent that it should not fall into the hands of the Portuguese. He knew that Mr. Rhodes had a scheme for the occupation of Mashunaland, but he did not know on what scale. He accordingly, on the twenty-eighth of October, 1889, wrote from Tete to the "Selous syndicate" at Cape Town. He described the route he thought should be taken, avoiding the Matabili, or any chief who even paid tribute to Lo Bengula. "Should Mr. Rhodes have got the charter, then this is his true policy: to open up a southern route from the British Protectorate to Mashunaland—which only requires to be made, and which will be quite as good a road as the northern one passing through Matabilland—and the first to develop the eastern slopes of Mashunaland, and not only to exploit and work the gold there, but to send in emigrants and settle up and occupy the country.

"It is folly to promulgate wild schemes for the colonisation of Central Africa, and to leave a country with the glorious climate and great natural resources of Mashunaland out in the cold. In Mashunaland Europeans can live, and thrive, and rear strong, healthy children. In Central Africa they cannot. Once get a footing in Eastern Mashunaland, and the country

will quickly be settled up westwards. And before very long the Matabili question will settle itself. Now or never is the time. . . . If Mashunaland is not worth this experiment, then there is no country in the interior of Africa that it will pay any company to spend money upon."

Selous followed this letter up himself and met Mr. Rhodes at Kimberley, and found him fully alive to the necessity of occupying Mashunaland at once, and determined to take possession of the country in the name of the British South African Company during the year 1890. Selous goes on to say: "It is due to Mr. Cecil Rhodes alone, I cannot too often repeat, that to-day our country's flag flies over Mashunaland. He alone of all Englishmen possessed at the same time the prescience and breadth of mind to appreciate the ultimate value of the country, combined with the strong will which in spite of all obstacles compelled the means and the power successfully to carry out the scheme for its immediate occupation. What the acquisition of this vast country means is as yet scarcely apparent to the great majority of Englishmen. . . . But in the not distant future, when quick and easy communication with Mashunaland has been established, and the many difficulties which now hamper the development of this the youngest of British colonies have been overcome, then I think Englishmen will be able to appreciate what they owe to Mr. Rhodes for inaugurating a new departure in South African history, and for securing for his countrymen the first 'show in' in a country which must ultimately become a very valuable possession." Strong words these; will they be proved true?

During the end of 1889 preparations were pushed forward for the expedition, the guidance was to be left entirely in Selous's hands. Many people thought the Matabili would resist the expedition to the last. The agents to the Chartered Company, Dr. Jameson in particular, were, however, at present on good terms with Lo Bengula, who gave them permission to cut the new road which was to pass through some territory over which he claimed control, and promised help in making it. Selous thinks he gave the promise, with the idea that the fulfilment of it would never be required. In March, 1890, Selous started to get men from Khama, and to chop a waggon road to the eastern border of his country. There he



was to meet Mr. Johan Colenbrander from Bulawayo, with a hundred of Lo Bengula's men, and continue the road-making towards Mashunaland. Not meeting Colenbrander at the appointed place, Selous determined to ride to Bulawayo to find out if Lo Bengula was ready to help or not. The chief received him in a friendly manner, but said that not only would he not help, but that he would prevent the road being made; that the road to Mashunaland was through Matabili.

"Rhodes has sent me many emissaries, and amongst them Dr. Jameson, whom I like, and whom I am told is Rhodes's mouth; but I am Lo Bengula, and I want to see the big white chief himself. I am tired of talking with Rhodes's messengers and the bearers of his words; their stories don't all agree. Now, therefore, let Selous go back once more to the Diamond Fields, and let him take Rhodes by the hand, and come back here with him, that I may speak with him face to face. I will then settle my business with him very quickly."

There is a good touch of kingly dignity here, with a dash of conviction that the white man would get the upper hand sooner or later.

Of course the request could not be granted, but Dr. Jameson accompanied Selous back to Bulawayo, while all efforts were being put forward to muster a force on the banks of the Macloutsie river sufficient to occupy Mashunaland, whether Lo Bengula liked it or no. The force collected amounted to four hundred white men, together with the Bechwanaland Border Police, who remained at Macloutsie, and two companies of the British South African Company's Police, who were to protect the base at Tuli a little in advance of Macloutsie. At this time there was not a yard of road made beyond Macloutsie, and there lay between Macloutsie camp and Mount Hampden—the goal of the expedition—a trackless wilderness of four hundred and sixty miles. Selous, having returned from escorting Jameson some way on his road to Bulawayo, returned to the expeditionary force, and started to Macloutsie to find out a good line for a waggon road. He selected a line which would be fairly supplied with water all the year round, crossing the Tuli six miles below its junction with the Shashi river, close to a round-topped hill which would be a strong post in case of attack. Selous obtained leave to begin making the road, and on the eighteenth of July he had opened

up a waggon track to the Tuli river, and the first section of the road to Mashunaland—a section of some fifty miles long—lay open. Before Selous returned to Macloutsie he collected information as to his next section, planned it all out in his mind, arranging it to Matipi's, and from thence to Chibi's, and from Chibi's on to the Mashunaland plateau. This last section was the only one which he feared would be troublesome. Once on the plateau the whole country was familiar to Selous, and the difficulties would be passed.

Towards the end of June the forces were inspected, and a start was made. The expedition was met by messengers from Lo Bengula, saying that there was no road round Matabililand, and that he would not have one made. To this message fitting answers were made, but the effect on the coloured boys attached to the expedition was exceedingly bad, desertions becoming numerous, and had it not been for Khama coming to their assistance, not a coloured boy would have crossed to Tuli. Khama sent a contingent of two hundred men under the command of his brother Radi-Kladi. These being mostly mounted were divided by Selous into sections, and used as scouts. As soon as Lo Bengula's messengers had started back, a start was made upon the second section of road-making, for time was precious, Selous calculating that if Lo Bengula determined to attack it would take him twenty-five days to collect his forces and reach the expedition, and in twenty-five days, by good working, he knew he could get through the low and thickly-wooded country. At the banks of the Umshabetsi, Selous received orders from Colonel Pennefather, who was in command, that the road-making party were not to advance until the main body came up. Upon the main body coming up a fresh start was made, and as the whole column of over eighty waggons straggled out to a length of over two miles, it was resolved to cut from here two parallel roads. On the first of August the Luntiriver was reached, and from here Selous was without the aid of natives to help him in his duties as guide, so he asked leave to be allowed to go ahead and examine the country for himself. This he did, with Lieutenant Nicholson, a young Transvaaler, a Hottentot boy, and one of Khama's mounted scouts. What he particularly wanted to find was a way across a line of hills which lay some way in front immediately before the plateau of Mashuna-

land, when by chance he found an easy pass, which he named "Providential Pass." The name was afterwards changed by newcomers, who did not know what a load its discovery had lifted from Selous's mind. On his return to the camp a start was immediately made, and on the thirteenth of August "the whole expedition camped close to the head of Providential Pass, and on the following day trekked on to the open country. Here Fort Victoria was established, but has since been abandoned; the township of Victoria—the site of which I myself selected—having been laid out on the high ground between the Umchegi and Umshagashi rivers." Just before the expedition reached Fort Victoria an intimation was received from Lo Bengula, ordering the leader to turn back "unless he thought himself strong enough to go on." Selous thinks that the King thought that the expedition was still at Tuli, and that when he found out that they had actually reached the open country he knew that his opportunity was past. He gives his opinion thus: "I have heard it stated that it was only the extreme friendliness of Lo Bengula and the Matabili people that made the expedition to Mashunaland possible. That is not my view. We cut the road to Mashunaland in defiance of them, and our advance would most certainly have been resisted but for two circumstances. The first was the fact that during the progress of the expedition a well-equipped force of five hundred mounted men of the Bechwana Border Police were encamped on the south-western border of Matabilland, and the second, that after the expedition crossed the Tuli, and until it reached the plateau of Mashunaland, Lo Bengula and his people never knew where we were." On the first of September the source of the Umgezi, where Fort Charter was established, was reached, and on the eleventh of September, 1890, the British flag was raised at Fort Salisbury on Mount Hampden.

Next the British South African Company set to work to occupy Manica, to which the Portuguese put forth claims, which Selous considers to be of the most shadowy kind. A treaty was made with the chief Umtasa by which possession was taken of a large tract of very valuable auriferous country. For three months afterwards Selous was travelling about the southern and eastern districts of Mashunaland, concluding treaties with all the principal native chiefs in those districts. On the twenty-seventh of November he reached Fort Salisbury, and set to work

to write a description of the expedition for the "Graphic," which was, however, lost in the following manner. A weekly mail was established from Salisbury to Tuli, a light mail-bag being carried over the four hundred miles by relays of men and horses. The mail-bag which left on the eighteenth of December bore amongst the letters Selous's supplement for the "Graphic." The man in charge, Thomas by name, rode one horse, leading another on which was the mail-bag. After proceeding some way in the dark the two horses commenced to snort and plunge, and then galloped forward. Thomas knew there was a lion behind. The lion gained rapidly, sprang up, and seized Thomas's horse, throwing the rider from the saddle. The lion lost his hold and the horse galloped off, Thomas taking refuge in a tree. He was rescued the next morning, and the horses turned up at the next post station, but minus the post-bag, which was not picked up until four months later.

For a year Selous continued working for the British South African Company, and in October of 1892 left for the Cape on his way to England. Since the recent troubles with the Matabili he has again proceeded to Mashunaland, to again take his place amongst the colonists. What will be the result of this disturbance it would be impossible to predict, but events are likely to march rapidly, and perhaps, even before this is published, something definite will have happened.

As will be gathered from some few references in the course of these articles, Selous has the highest opinion of the suitability of Mashunaland for colonisation, and of its richness in gold, and he devotes two chapters of his book to a history and description of Mashunaland and its people.

To begin with, "Mashuna" covers a considerable number of tribes, and there is some uncertainty as to how many may really be classed under the term of Mashuna, also as to the actual extent of territory which ought to be called Mashunaland. But whoever they are, or where they came from, they seem to be much the same as they were three centuries ago, when the Portuguese first set foot in that part of the world. There are remains of rude stone buildings, and ample signs of a large gold-dust crushing industry—some of the shafts found being as much as one hundred and twenty feet deep—which Selous thinks was carried on up to a very recent period.

His idea is that the early Zulu migrations northwards, with the massacres attendant thereupon, stopped the Mashunas. The walling in of towns has ceased, and this Selous puts down to the same reason, arguing that the Mashunas finding the walls, which protected them from less warlike tribes, no use against the fierce Zulus, abandoned them and fled whenever they heard of their approach. This is a description of a walled city. "First there was a hill on which were built several concentric walls, and the stone foundations of round huts, the whole being surrounded by a moat. A little further on there was a small kopje, composed of a few large blocks of granite, some of which were piled up in the centre in the form of a tower. The whole of the kopje was enclosed by a very well-built wall of about two hundred yards in circumference, eight feet in thickness, and ten feet in height. . . . Through this wall there were four entrances, apertures about four feet in height and two and a half feet in breadth. The apertures were let into the base of the wall, and were roofed over with large flat slabs of granite. Inside this wall were the foundations of numerous round buildings. These foundations were all very well built of closely-fitted pieces of square granite, and were about eighteen inches in depth. The huts that were built upon them must have been at least four times the size of the huts used by the natives at the present day." These stoneworks, Selous considers, must have been the work of the aborigines, who were spoilt by the fusion of a small number of traders and merchants who were themselves in a low state of civilisation.

It was in 1806 that the Zulu raids commenced, and this eventually almost depopulated the plateau of Mashunaland, which certainly made room for European colonists. Almost the whole of Mashunaland lies at an altitude of over three thousand feet above the sea, and possesses a temperate climate. "It has already been proved that European women and children enjoy excellent health all over the plateau of South-Eastern Africa, whether in Matabilland, Mashunaland, or Manica. In fact, these are emphatically countries that will rear a strong and hardy race of men—such men as are the descendants of the English and Scottish colonists of the Cape Colony, or the burly Boers of the Transvaal." He goes on to tell us something about the developement of the country after the occupation: "Before

I left the country in August, 1892, Salisbury had already been in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world for some months. The townships had been laid out, in which building sites, sold by auction, July, 1892, realised the sum of ten thousand pounds. . . . In two of these townships, Salisbury and Victoria, many substantial brick buildings had already been put up, and I hear that building is going on in Umtali as well. . . . Much of the land had been taken up by farmers, and it had already been proved that wheat, oats, barley, and all kinds of vegetables could be grown with great facility."

In addition to this Selous has a great belief in Mashunaland as a gold country. From time immemorial it has been a gold-bearing country, and Selous thinks that before the end of the century Mashunaland will take a high place among the gold-producing countries of the world. As to the administration Selous says but a few words, but in those few words pays a very high compliment to Dr. Jameson. "He was the man for the position. No other, taken all round, could have been quite what Dr. Jameson has been as administrator of Mashunaland in its early days."

Such, then, is the story of Mashunaland, such is Mashunaland itself, as described by one intimate with it in every respect. It surely sounds as a place expressly constructed for colonisation and progress. How the experiment will work out remains to be seen. It has its drawbacks in hostile natives on one border, and in the difficulties of transport, but this latter is to be overcome by a railway, and then we shall soon see whether Mashunaland will justify the fair promises made for her.

The rest of the book is devoted to hunting reminiscences, very similar to the hunting stories we gave last week, and a story of a curious accident which happened to Selous shall conclude this paper. He was out after elands, and having lost sight of the animal he was after, turned suddenly round in his saddle, and received a fearful blow in his eye from a branch of a tree, which half stunned him. Putting his hand to his eye he found it bleeding profusely, and returned to camp, where there were several Europeans, but Selous was too bad for them to doctor, and boys were sent to summon a Dr. Crook who was hunting with Mr. J. S. Jameson, a day's journey to the north. "Well, Dr. Crook

doctored me up 'secundum artem,' and the wound in the corner of my eye healed up. It was, however, more than a month before I could see properly with my right eye. From time to time the wound opened and then healed up again, but the doctor could find no dead bone in it. Time went on, and early the following year I returned to England, and one fine morning was walking down Bond Street with Mr. Rowland Ward, the well-known naturalist of Piccadilly, when I began to sneeze, and he accused me of having a cold. I denied the soft impeachment, and presently felt something come down one of the ducts into the back of my mouth and spat it into my hand, and there was a piece of hard African wood, the end of the branch which, eight months previously, had struck me in the eye on the bank of the Landaza river in Mashunaland, and, having passed right through the bone with the force of the blow, had lain perdu in my head all that time, till at last, having got into one of the ducts at the back of the nose, it had passed down into my mouth. This piece of wood was not a splinter, but a solid bit of hard wood, quite three-quarters of an inch long, and of a very considerable thickness."

It will be gathered, no doubt, from the foregoing, that the book is well worth reading, both for the stories it contains and for the history of the British occupation of a large territory. Readers will not be disappointed, though they will probably long for a better map, the one bound up with the book being utterly unworthy of the printing, paper, and illustrations.

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Zenobia returned home half an hour later, the servant who admitted her said mysteriously:

"There's a gentleman here, miss, waiting to see you, and I don't know if I've done right, but I've shewn him into the drawing-room."

Zenobia grew very white, and her heart sank very low indeed.

"A gentleman? Who is he?" she asked, and her voice shook strangely.

"He wouldn't give any name, miss, and he wouldn't take any refusal. I told him

my mistress was out, and wouldn't be back till late, but he said it was you he wanted—'Miss Zenobia,' he called you, miss—and he wasn't in any hurry, and he would wait till you came in. So what could I do, miss, and he speaking like a gentleman!—though I shouldn't have called him anything but a person to look at, and he not even in a high hat! Will you see him, miss?"

"I must, I suppose—yes, I will see him."

Very slowly Zenobia ascended the stairs, feeling far more inclined to run away—back to her friends, and the cheerful security of Cecil's pleasant sitting-room. But pride and common sense prevailed, and she went steadily on, though her knees seemed giving way under her, and her head felt giddy and confused. She paused for one moment outside the door, her trembling fingers on the handle; then she threw it open resolutely, and entered.

One glance confirmed her fears. The man she dreaded to see was standing on the hearthrug, looking at her composedly, with a quiet smile on his worn face that testified to his keen appreciation of all the peculiarities of the situation.

"You wished to see me?" Zenobia said coldly, as she paused on the threshold, her head held higher than usual because of the humiliation of spirit that seemed about to overwhelm her.

"I did, my dear, and I do. I fear the wish is not mutual, but that, I must confess, is my fault as well as my misfortune. I have neglected my duties too long to expect anything else."

"What do you wish to say to me?"

"A great deal; but first"—he walked over to the door and closed it carefully—"there is no occasion to take the servants into our confidence, is there? Of course, if you prefer that they should hear all our private affairs——"

"Our private affairs?" she repeated. "By what right do you speak to me so? Oh, I remember what you said that evening! I am not likely to have forgotten it! But if it is so, if you really are—what you said, why have I not known it before?"

"You'd better ask the Brabournes that," he said drily. "As I've been out of the country since you were a year old, I can really give you no information on the subject."

"Your very name is strange to me," she went on restlessly. "I know nothing of

Herbert Lovell. My father's name was Brabourne."

"Your mother's name was," he corrected her quickly. "How like her you are, child, as you stand there! I knew you from the likeness the first moment I set eyes on you; though you've a look of the Lovells, too. And have they really kept you so completely in the dark as all that? Upon my soul, it was too bad of Brabourne!"

He spoke with some vehemence, and more feeling than he had hitherto shown, and Zenobia could no longer doubt that his startling assertion was true. Did she not herself recognise that "look of the Lovells" of which he spoke?

"I never heard your name till that evening. I have always been called Zenobia Brabourne, and no one ever told me you still lived. Why was this?" she asked, fixing her grave eyes upon him searchingly.

He shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating gesture that had something of mockery in it, and smiled.

"What would you have, Zenobia? I was an unlucky man, and necessity had taught me strange lessons. I tried to make a career for myself in several ways that were not exactly in accordance with the Brabourne traditions. Do you wonder that I offended the Slowton susceptibilities, and did not altogether conform to the provincial standard of respectability? Do I look quite up to that standard now?"

Zenobia could not honestly say that he did, but she felt that it would scarcely be respectful to tell him so. She remained silent, therefore, and waited to hear what more he had to say.

They were a strange contrast, this father and daughter, as they stood thus confronting each other in Mrs. Brabourne's richly decorated drawing-room; and the contrast was all the stronger for the undeniable likeness between them. Zenobia's tall, slight figure, with its unmistakeable air of distinction; her proudly poised head, and lovely, delicately cut features, were well set off by the admirable simplicity of the dress she wore, and harmonised well with the elegance and luxury of the room; she was in character with her surroundings, and they made a fitting background for her stately and lily-like loveliness.

There was no stateliness in the father's figure, no dignity in his manner, for though he was of medium height, and carried himself fairly well, he was too

restless and quick in his movements for either one or the other. His clothes were hopelessly shabby, and looked as though they had never been good in their best days; his collar was frayed, and not so clean as it might have been; and altogether he must strike the most casual observer as a man who had been acquainted with the seamy side of life so long that he had forgotten any other. Such as he was, however, he did not seem at all sensitive as to what his daughter might think of him; though he was far too shrewd not to divine the true reason of her silence.

"Your silence is eloquent, Zenobia," he said, with a smile that had a good deal of quiet humour in it. "I'm not up to the Slowton standard evidently, even in your partial eyes. Partial! I don't think Martha Brabourne herself would regard me with eyes of such grave disapproval. You are not pleased to see me, and really I don't wonder at it. But come and sit down, child, and let us talk over the position comfortably. After all, it's got to be faced somehow."

Of this Zenobia felt bitterly conscious; but her conviction of the necessity was far from reconciling her to it. She remembered with a sinking heart his strong prejudice against Mr. Devondale, and his emphatic "He shall teach you no lessons, girl!" Would he insist upon it? Had he the right to do so after the long years of neglect, after leaving her so completely to the Brabournes' care?

She sat down in her aunt's straight-backed easy-chair without a word; she felt that she could not speak. What, indeed, was there to say? She did not as yet know what the position was, so was quite unprepared to talk it over, whether comfortably or uncomfortably.

Her silence disconcerted her father a little, had she only known it; a silent woman was a new thing in his experience, and he didn't quite know what to make of her. He was fully aware that much that he was about to say would be unpleasant, and he felt that it would be far easier to say it in the heat of argument; but how to do this when she met all he said with such absolute, such uncompromising silence?

"Have you seen anything more of Devondale lately?"

He put the question abruptly, but Zenobia's thoughts were too full of the young tutor, and her father's prejudice against him, for it to take her by surprise.

"Yes," she replied quietly, and she raised

her eyes for a moment to his face. It was an inscrutable look, and taught him nothing.

"You have? I might have known it. Devondale was never the man to let such a chance slip. Have you seen much of him?"

"Yes; a great deal."

"Ah! Well, I shall put a stop to all that now. I should have done it before, but that very evening I saw you I had to go to London on important business, and I only returned to-day. Devondale seems to have made the most of the time, confound him!"

"Why do you wish to put a stop to my acquaintance with Mr. Devondale?" Zenobia asked, with her usual simple directness of purpose.

"Because he isn't fit for you to know, and I hate him."

"That you hate him, yes." Zenobia did not think the worse of him for that, it was quite evident. Why should she? Her father, as he had himself told her, had offended the Slowton susceptibilities, and fallen short of the provincial standard of respectability. Was he, then, capable of judging who was, or was not, fit for her to know? She was inclined to doubt it.

She looked at the man before her, with his indescribable air of shiftiness and degradation, and compared him mentally with Francis Devondale, whose manly bearing and frank blue eyes seemed to give the lie to that charge of unfitness. Oh, it must be false: she did not credit it for a moment; and there was a proud smile on her lips as she said quietly: "You say he is not fit for me to know, but I know him pretty well already; better, perhaps, than you do. Mr. Paxton trusts his son to him, and——"

"So I am to trust my daughter, I suppose? But just because this Paxton is a fool, I must be doubly careful."

"Mr. Paxton is very careful where Cecil is concerned, and his standard of respectability is a very high one."

"He's been taken in, then, that's all; and I shall make it my business to enlighten him as to the real character of the man he trusts; him, and all the other good people of Slowton. You may know Frank Devondale, but not as I know him. You looked at me with grave eyes of disapproval just now, but I tell you my life has been—well, not white exactly, but grey, passable grey, compared to the blackness of his. He's the most unmiti-

gated scamp even I have ever met, and my experience has been tolerably extensive and tolerably shady."

He spoke earnestly enough, and apparently with all sincerity; and Zenobia listened, and wondered more and more. Surely, surely he was talking at random, or labouring under some extraordinary delusion! That his words could really be true, and Mr. Devondale deserve all the horrible things he said of him, Zenobia did not believe for a single instant; and yet how could she disprove them?

"I cannot believe it. Oh, I am sure there is some mistake!" she exclaimed. "If you had seen him as I have, when Cecil is ill, looking after the boy with all a woman's tenderness, never impatient, never out of temper; if you had heard the bright, manly way he talks to him, and makes him take interest in external things till he forgets his own sufferings—oh, if you had seen and heard all this as I have, you would know that your charge is impossible—as I do."

"What you say merely convinces me that he's the same Frank Devondale he always was," Mr. Lovell said moodily. "I'm sorry you've seen so much of him, child; but you'll have to know the truth, sooner or later. Believe it or not now; I don't expect you to take my word for it, but know that I can prove every word I have said."

"I am sure he can disprove it, then; and I wait confidently till you give him the opportunity of doing so."

"He shall have that fast enough. See here, Zenobia; I cannot understand how your aunt allows you to associate with an opera-singer, even if she knows nothing worse against him."

"An opera-singer?" she repeated; but more, as it seemed, in wonder than in horror.

"Yes; an opera-singer. Slowton is not so strait-laced as it used to be, or he would never have been tolerated here at all. But I suppose he has kept that little fact dark?"

"He sings very beautifully."

"Yes, he might have made a good thing of it if he'd had the sense to keep quiet. You don't believe me, Zenobia; but just ask him next time you meet if he remembers Herbert Lovell, and the scratch company that went starring in the States. Then you'll be able to judge for yourself."

"I shall ask him nothing. I am no

spy, and I can trust him," she said indignantly.

"Still, it might be only kind to warn him. If he knew an old friend was near, he might like to beat a retreat while there was still time. Upon my soul, Zenobia, I speak in his interest since you seem to take it so to heart."

"And I could not insult him by supposing such a thing possible; I could not insult him by 'warning' him, as you call it, just as though I believed your presence here could really injure him. You must act as you see fit, but I will not be your accomplice; no, not though you gave me ten thousand reasons for it, and all 'in his interest.' There is a mistake somewhere, I'm sure—if, indeed, you say these things in good faith."

"There's no mistake; there's no room for any. I've seen him—in the dusk, certainly, but what of that? I've heard him sing. No, no, Zenobia; my case is clear, and all Slowton shall know what manner of tutor your careful Mr. Paxton has chosen for his son. I'll give you till this time to-morrow to think it over; and if you like to give him a hint in the meanwhile, you can. He has injured me deeply, but I'm not vindictive—out of reason. And see here, girl; one good turn deserves another. I give him this much grace, and in return you'll say nothing to the Brabournes about my visit this evening. I prefer to take them by surprise at my own time."

"I will say nothing till this time to-morrow," Zenobia replied, after a moment's

reflection. "Longer than that I cannot keep silence in justice to my uncle and aunt, who are all the father and mother I have ever known."

"That's true," he assented; "and more shame for me. And yet it's a good thing for you, too. You couldn't have grown up half so well under my fatherly care. Well, I must be going now. Good-bye, Zenobia."

She rose, and followed him to the door.

"I cannot ask you to stay here, for perhaps——"

"The Brabournes wouldn't like it? Most certainly they would not; nor would you! I quite understand. Should you think so badly of me, child, if it wasn't for that confounded Devondale? But there, it isn't fair to ask. Good night—if I haven't spoilt your night for you, as I fear I have!"

And he ran down the stairs without waiting for any reply, and in another moment the hall-door had closed softly behind him. He was out in the dark street once more, and Zenobia was alone.

"It wasn't fair to ask; no," he thought, as he glanced up at the window of the room where he had left her; and then across the road to that other window, whence he had heard the well-remembered singing of the man he hated ring out into the evening silence. "She's a high-spirited girl, and we should never have hit it off well; still, if it hadn't been for him—— But it's too late now, and I've one more injury to avenge, that's all."

And he passed on up the street.

## NOTICE.

*On Wednesday, the 15th of November, will be published,*  
**THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER**  
 OF  
**ALL THE YEAR ROUND,**

BY  
**MARY ANGELA DICKENS and MARGARET MOULE,**  
 Joint Authors of "TAKEN ON TRUST."

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## HOME NOTES

AND  
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**SKELETON LEAVES.**—Those who wish to prepare skeleton leaves will find the following directions useful. Take a large saucepan of cold water and a piece of scrubbing soap, about four inches square, cut into small pieces. Gather mature leaves, seed-vessels, etc. Put some soap into the water, then a layer of leaves one by one; then more soap, then leaves, and so on. Put on a lid, set the pan by the side of a fire, and let it simmer. After an hour, take out a few leaves and try them between the thumb and finger. If the pulp separates readily from the fibre, remove them from the fire; if not, let the pan remain. Some leaves, such as ivy, are done in an hour or two; others of a tougher fibre take half a day. Now lay a leaf upon a plate, under a tap of running water, and beat it with sharp strokes with a hard brush—say a tooth-brush; the green matter will run off with the water. When the skeleton is quite clean, dry it upon blotting-paper. To bleach the specimens put a quarter of a pound of chloride of lime into a large bottle of water, cork it, and let it stand some days. Strain it, and mix with more water in a basin; immerse the leaves, etc. Again carefully watch and remove them as soon as they are white, for the lime quickly renders them brittle and rotten. Wash again in pure water and dry as before. As the stems usually come away from most leaves, it is well to boil several stalks separately, and after bleaching to mount the leaves by gumming them to the stems.

**CLEAR LEMON JELLY.**—One ounce packet of Swinborne's isinglass or gelatine, six ounces loaf sugar, three lemons, the whites and shells of two eggs, one quart of water. Soak the isinglass, or gelatine, in half a pint of cold water, pour over it a pint and a half of boiling water, and stir till dissolved; put it into a saucepan with six ounces of loaf sugar, the peel of two lemons, and the juice of three. Whisk the whites and shells of two eggs with a wineglass of cold water, and stir them well into the whole; then boil five minutes without stirring; let it stand ten minutes near the fire, and then pass through a jelly-bag till quite clear. This delicious jelly is very refreshing in hot weather, is easily made, and, requiring no wine, is very inexpensive.

**FOR STINGS.**—It is most important at this time of the year, and with so much disease in the air, that people should be careful about even such little matters as mosquito stings and the bites of the ordinary house fly. Insects are frequently the carriers of disease from one person to another. Quite lately a theory has been started that flies are most dangerous and active agents in spreading cholera germs, and it has been proved to the satisfaction of many eminent physicians that consumption is often propagated by the lodging-house bug. It behoves us therefore to be careful. Fortunately, just as we are beginning to grasp the dangers which surround us on every side, and beginning to understand that every letter which we receive through the post may swarm with disease-spreading microbes, that the dangerous germs lie ensconced in the pages of the books we take out from the circulating library, infest the railway carriages, lurk in our very clothes, and swarm in the air we inhale, then comes the knowledge of a weapon which we may safely use for their destruction and to mitigate the ravages they have already committed. This is the new non-poisonous antiseptic which has just been discovered, and which I recommended to a correspondent the other day with the best result. Its name is Izal, and it is the very preventative that is wanted.

**FILTERS** should be frequently cleansed, for if this is neglected the various impurities which they extract from the water which passes through them accumulate, until they are a source of far greater danger than unfiltered water would be. In the case of those filters which depend for their efficacy upon a lump of charcoal, the latter should be well boiled once a week; if this is not done it collects animal organisms to a considerable extent. Lumps of charcoal that have been left in filters for some months, have, on being broken, been found to contain large worms. No sort of filter that cannot be thoroughly cleansed should be used. Experiments have shown that water which has passed through dirty filters is many thousand times more impure than the same water unfiltered. People too often think that if they buy a good filter they have done all that is necessary towards ensuring the purity of their drinking water, quite ignoring the fact that filters, like all other domestic utensils, must be kept clean.



## ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

**ENQUIRER.**—The only thing you can do, is to have curtains on brass rods that will draw, and cover the windows at night. Lace curtains that are drawn daily soon get untidy-looking, therefore we suggest that you have cretonne, or art serge. A pretty poppy pattern cretonne would be nice for summer; large terra-cotta poppies, with green foliage on a cream ground, would look well with your furniture. In winter, art serge, in terra-cotta, edged with ball fringes, and with a deep turn-over heading of plush, would be warm and serviceable. It is never a disadvantage to have the carpet smaller than the room; have the edges cut level, then have a surround of Japanese or Indian matting. Of course, floorecloth or linoleum surrounds may be washed frequently, and are, perhaps, better if the room is very much used. Either linoleum or good floorecloth will last for years with care; they should be well washed once a week with warm soap and water to remove dirt, then thoroughly dried and polished with beeswax and turpentine. With daily dusting this will keep them in excellent condition. Unless your boards are very even and smooth, we do not recommend you to stain and varnish, especially by the window, for, unless the staining and varnishing or polishing is well done, the boards look horrid, especially in a room that is much used.

**SUNBURN.**—The browning of the skin was described by the French savant, M. Chevreul, as a kind of oxidation of the skin due to the heat of the sun and the strong air of the sea, etc. He, therefore, considered it impossible to prevent it entirely. It can be considerably lessened by a few precautions. All "creams" and similar greasy substances should be sparingly used; they may turn rancid in the sun and produce small black spots, very difficult to get rid of. A little rice powder on the face is a good thing, but ladies object to this as it may lead to unflattering opinions. Wear a thick, white veil, fastened very loosely so as not to touch the face. Here are two recipes for keeping the skin fair which are worth trying on account of their simplicity: Wash in warm water in winter and cold water in summer, add a few drops of volatile salts to the water, and, after wiping, use a little powder to dry the skin. This will preserve the skin from the effects of sea air. The other is: Wash the face occasionally in water as hot as you can bear it; the pores of the skin are opened and cleansed. Then rinse immediately in cold water, which closes the pores.

**PAINTING ON VELVET.**—For painting upon velvet use the best moist water-colours. Velveteen is better for the purpose than silk velvet, as it is shorter in the pile, and therefore better adapted to receive wet colours, as great care is required to prevent the pile from getting matted, and laid flat while the colours are being applied. The process is as follows: Pin the material on a drawing-board, placing a piece of paper between it and the board. Prick the outlines of the design on cartridge paper, and pounce it through the holes on the velvet. Paint with "scrub" brushes (made of bristles), perfectly round, and cut even at the ends. Three brushes suffice. Mix the colours with veloutine, a medium specially used in textile painting. Dip the scrub in and allow it to drain, so that it shall be full of colour but not dripping, and brush the latter on the velvet, holding the brush upright. Let the colour dry before adding any touches of paint upon it. The tinting should be from light to dark—the first coat being of the lightest shades, the second the medium shades, the third the darkest. Transparency at the edges of leaves of flowers is effected by not bringing the second painting quite up to the last touches of the first. Minuteness of detail is not possible of attainment in velvet painting. The effects to be aimed at are depth, softness, and richness. Markings and veinings must be put in with the side of the scrub.

**CARE OF WINDOW PLANTS.**—No plant will be healthy unless its leaves are kept free from dust; hence frequent washing is very essential, although it is a bad plan to wet the flowers of plants when watering, or to allow drops of water to stand on the leaves in the sunshine. House plants are often kept in the same pots from year's end to year's end, and therefore are obliged to exist in exhausted soil and an unhealthy pot. If re-potted every year the plants will grow well and look healthy, however old. I would remind my readers, though, that a fresh pot need not mean a bigger one, for where blossom is required a small pot is essential. Never allow water to stand in the saucers unless the plants are semi-aquatic. Water fulfils a two-fold function. It supplies to plants food or elements to fertility contained in itself, and converts the plant-food, or nourishment of the soil, into a liquid form, so that it may be absorbed by the roots.

## HOME NOTES.

### CURIOUS EXPERIMENTS ON CORPULENCY.

—A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses, to moderately lean persons, of his well-known herbal decoction, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2lb. to even 12lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any person can test this for themselves by standing on a weighing-machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasion of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., the author of "Corpulency, and the Cure," price six stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drunk as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers or at the address given above.

**HOW TO CONCEAL OBESITY.**—"The stout lady is always asking what she shall wear in order that she may appear less bulky. She should not wear tight-fitting tailor-made suits; rosettes should never be worn at her belt, either at the back or

front; no lace or ribbon ruffs about the neck, though a soft feather one is permissible if it have long ends. A short skirt will give a queer, dumpy look, which is particularly undesirable. The hair should never be low on her neck; it should be high, and arranged with great smoothness. Strings of beads round the neck are prohibited, and if her fingers are short and fat even rings should not be worn. After all, this is only a makeshift, although large sums are paid by fashionable modistes for artistic designs and blendings in order to conceal embonpoint. What seems to escape the notice of the stout lady is the fact that the cost of the trickery with the dresses is more than she would have to pay for a real and actual reduction of weight. Thanks to modern chemistry, or rather botanical research, it is not unusual for a stout person to lose in weight 7lb. in a week, and with a rapid return to perfect health, losing that oppressive feeling which troubles stout persons. As much as 4lb., in rare cases, have been lost in twenty-four hours. A stout lady, due to attend a garden party, say, in a week's time, would show most perceptibly that she had reduced her weight, for when under Mr. Russell's treatment in particular the medicine first attacks the parts which are most prominently obese, and she would appear considerably attenuated without the aid of the dressmaker. Many ladies ruin their constitutions by living in a state of semi-starvation to keep their weight down. There is not the slightest necessity, for Mr. Russell, the author of the well-known work "Corpulency, and the Cure," frequently finds that the person eats more, although perhaps losing from 2lb. to 4lb. a week; and the decoction, which is absolutely harmless, is a most pleasant refreshing drink. As this paragraph may have interested lady readers, the address of the publishers of the little book, which only costs six stamps, post free, may be given here. It is Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C. This book is most interesting and useful." —From "Midland Daily Telegraph," Aug. 12, 1893.

"Sunday Times" says: "Mr. Russell's aim is to eradicate, to cure the disease, and that his treatment is the true one seems beyond all doubt. The medicine he prescribes does not lower, but builds up and tones the system." Book (159 pages) with recipe and notes how to pleasantly and rapidly cure Obesity, post free, six stamps.

**WHY ARE WE NOT ALL CORPULENT?**

This is a question we find answered by the latest specialist in corpulency, a man who, in our opinion, has done more to cure this distressing incumbrance than all the other so-called adipose-therapeutists put together. We have Mr. Russell's new edition before us, entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," wherein he explains that many men can eat an abundance of everything and yet appear lean and hungry, while the next unfortunate cannot eat but scantily without building up a huge frame of unwieldy bulk. Thin persons, the author explains, generally have a very strong liver, which vigorously separates from the blood any superfluity of its fatty constituents; per contra, the liver of the victim to obesity is constitutionally weak, hence it fails, without assistance, to throw off the carbonaceous and fat-forming foods. The book from which we derive this information is published by Mr. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., who has succeeded in manufacturing a purely vegetable compound which has an almost magical effect in the reduction of unhealthy fat. Experimentally it has been given in large doses to those who only carry an amount of fat conducive to the proper production of heat, and the result is that the decoction will not have the remotest effect—not the slightest reduction of weight takes place, while in the case of a superfluity of unhealthy adipose tissue the individual frequently loses 2 lbs., and much more in serious cases, in twenty-four hours. We should have liked to pursue this matter further, for it is far more interesting in our opinion than experimenting upon bees, rats, cats, and such like, for what may appear startling in the results of certain foods given to the smaller animals may not be so conclusive or applicable in the case of human beings. We can with pleasure advise our readers to get this book and read for themselves, and, moreover, no one can complain of the price, as it only costs four stamps.

**A NEW POWDER-PUFF.**—A remarkably dainty little handkerchief is the medium for an undetectable powder-puff, the invention of Messrs. Eugene Rimmel and Company, Limited. This is already perfumed and powdered ready for use, and simply looks like an ordinary lace handkerchief with a muslin centre. This will make a very suitable little present for a lady, and may be carried about in the pocket, without being recognised in any way as a powder-puff.

**SILK TAPESTRY WORK.**—The other day I happened to visit the offices of The Singer Machine Manufacturing Company, 17, Chiswell Street, Finsbury, and my attention was at once attracted to the most exquisite silk tapestry work I had ever seen. Looking more closely into it, I could not help remarking, "What patience and industry must be needed to do all that by hand." The assistant smiled loftily as he remarked, "Pardon me, madam, it is done by machine;" and not only that, but I found it was done by an ordinary Singer V.S. Household Machine such as I possess, and which I suppose tens of thousands of other ladies possess, that the work could be done after a few days' practice, and that the machine needed no special appliances. I took my first lesson there and then, and should advise you to stop all further hand-work until you have seen what their machines can do. The advantages of this new creation are obvious, and, I am satisfied, only require a little publicity to make it generally popular; there is also the great saving of time. Its application covers the widest possible field; in fact, there seems to be no limit to the features in connection with which it can be used. For instance, the panels of ladies' dresses, panels of ships, panels of doors and windows for internal house decoration, the fronts of pianos, mantle borders, altar-cloths, mosaic church decorations, bed hangings, draught and fire screens, all kinds of banners, curtains, bedroom decorations, smoking-caps, tea cosies, table-cloths, slippers, etc., etc.; and the raised nature of the work, in connection with shrubbery and branches and twigs of trees, is really more natural than the effect produced by oil painting. Some specimens produced bid fair to vie with the tapestry work on the walls of the chambers of Hampton Court Palace.

**CLOTHES-POSTS** soon decay at the bottom if left standing in the ground, but if fitted into sockets so as to be removable, they will last for years. The sockets should be made of one-inch elm, eighteen inches in length, tapering downwards. When finished they ought to be about three inches square inside at the upper end. These should be driven firmly into the earth till just level with the surface, the posts are then made to drop in and stand firm. It would be best to make a cover to each socket to keep litter from falling in when the post is removed, and the socket-wood should all be covered with tar.

## AN OMNIBUS STORY.

SELDOM nowadays is the spectacle of the present writer ascending to the top of an omnibus witnessed by the British public. Whether on account of its rarity, the performance is regarded with a larger share of interest than it perhaps intrinsically merits, it is not for me to say. I only know that of late years I have become painfully aware that my figure is not seen to the best advantage while engaged in athletic exercise, far less when suspended in mid-air. There is an inelegant bulk and rotundity about it unsuited to activity, nor, parenthetically, does it accommodate itself readily to narrow seats and cramped positions. Therefore I especially abstain from bringing it into conspicuous contrast against the sky-line at such an elevation as the act in question necessitates.

Nevertheless, on a recent occasion, the weather being favourable and the inside of the vehicle full, I was tempted to take advantage of the facilities which modern improvements offer for reaching the roof by means of the winding stair. And it is the unexpected experience of that journey which lures me into this desultory gossip. But for the contrivance alluded to, I fear I should never again have enjoyed that most delightful point of observation formerly known as the "knife-board," but now too often converted into "garden seats." Who that has ever travelled on the top of a 'bus, say from Mile End viâ Holborn and Oxford Street to Shepherd's Bush, or by the Strand and Piccadilly to West Kensington, can fail to be struck by the marvellous sight of men, manners, and customs he then looks down on? Such a microcosm of humanity is unequalled by any city in the world, and but for the familiarity of it, would provoke daily wonder. To the youngster it passes unheeded, but for the oldster, like this individual, it has peculiar and sentimental attractions.

For, luckily or unluckily, as the case may be, he is just old enough to remember the first line of omnibuses that ever traversed the London thoroughfares in July, 1829—they were one year earlier in Paris. His infantile memory has faintly recorded and stowed away in one of the remote pigeon-holes of that antique bureau which he dignifies by the name of "his brain," a feeble picture of Mr. Shillibeer's vehicle. He can dimly realise in his mind's eye what a low-roofed, narrow,

stuffy, inconvenient, jolting machine it was, with no seats outside except like those of the stage-coach, one beside the driver, and four close behind him, and how coachman and conductor were habited in uniform with a stiff, bell-crowned, be-corded, and be-tasselled beaver cap, straight-peaked, on the model of the Prussian infantry head-gear of the period. He can recall how, starting from the "Wheat-sheaf" tavern at Paddington, then a thoroughly rural suburb, and pulling up for a minute at the ill-favoured "Yorkshire Stingo" as it turned out of the Edgware Road, "The Omnibus" ran to the Bank by way of the New Road, now the Marylebone, passed the then recently finished Regent's Park, and by St. Pancras Church to Battle Bridge, which, long since turned into King's Cross, was faced on the site of the Great Northern terminus by the London Fever Hospital, and defaced by a life-sized plaster effigy of George the Fourth, surmounting a nondescript kind of obelisk or kiosque—how the 'bus laboured slowly up Pentonville Hill to the "Angel," at Islington, and then descending to the City Road, after crossing the New River, it reached its destination at the Bank through Finsbury and Moorgate—fares, one shilling inside and sixpence out.

Curious and interesting as it always is thus to look back, I found my mood on the occasion of my recent journey sympathetically encouraged by the driver.

I liked the look of him as he pulled up at Piccadilly where I was waiting. He was an elderly man, but hale and hearty, with a genial smile and a ruddy glow about his face, due to the constant exposure to all weathers. His occupation was a hard and sedentary one, but, given a good constitution, there is nothing more healthy. His clear blue eyes caught mine, and we seemed to establish a distant acquaintance on the spot.

"Full inside, sir," says the conductor, as I jostled through the crowd to the entrance.

"Then I'll go out," and in a fit of desperation, and remembering the driver's eye, I catch hold of the bright handrail, and, regardless of appearances, up I go, muttering a fervent prayer that I shall not be observed. As soon as I am landed at the top of the winding stair, of course the 'bus starts immediately. I have a momentary vision of my form taking a somersault into a passing dust-cart, and of beholding the world for a second or two upside down; but this air-drawn terror is quickly dis-

pelled by a rap on the knee and a strain on the wrist as I grasp at a bar. No, I am still on the roof, though in a wholly undignified attitude, as was to be expected.

All the garden-seats are occupied save one in the front, and I make for this with the staggering gait of a man on board ship in a storm. By a series of jerks, bounds, clutches at coat-collars, and concussions against other passengers' shoulders, I gain at last the haven of rest, and sink into it gratefully, to find, according to the new arrangement, that although close to the driver, the seat is no longer beside him but higher, and a little to his left rear, with a protecting handrail in front. Once there the position is agreeable enough, if there was but a trifle more leg room. I had looked forward, as in the old days, to a chat with my friendly official on the box, and said as much in his ear.

"Not been up on one of these 'buses before, sir?" enquired the man.

"No, and I don't like it," I reply; "seems to me top-heavy—might capsize at any moment if anything went wrong. I have noticed most of these garden-seated 'buses overhang the wheels. That can't be right; their equilibrium must be very ticklish; the centre of gravity might be easily lost."

"Just so, sir; I have often thought as much; but we must take things as they come in this world."

"But you don't like it, do you? Not so handy for talking to your passengers?"

"No, sir, no; I am all alone in my glory, as you may say, but a little intelligent conversation wiles away the time, you know, sir—shortens the journey considerable—and parties don't seem inclined to gossip now they are perched up so far behind one."

"Driven a 'bus long?" I ask.

"On and off these forty year, sir."

"Good many changes in that time even," I say; "but you can't remember as many in the omnibus line as I can," and then, with the garrulity of my years, I inundate him with a flood of my reminiscences. This leads to a comparison of notes, mutual corrections on small points, such as dates, routes, and so on, and many comments on the recent marvellous increase of traffic and population.

"What it's coming to and what it will be in a few years is more than I can say, or anybody else," adds the coachman. "Lucky they have opened up wider roads where they can; but they'll all be too narrow by-and-by. There now, see here."

We were reaching the Knightsbridge Road near the Albert Gate, and the cross traffic from William Street into the Park occasioned a block in a moment. When we moved again it was marvellous to see the skill of most drivers in steering clear of even a scratch of a wheel, though with but a hair's breadth to spare.

Presently a cab does touch us.

"Ah! stupid!" shouts my friend at the offender, who of course retorts surlily: "Where are you a-coming, then?"

"Go on, you old Guy Fawkes, don't talk to your betters," is the reply, which again provokes the surly one to further speech:

"You—why, you want your 'air jolly well gnawed—that's what you want—you'd be the better for that," and so forth. I only wish I could remember a quarter of the various styles of chaff bandied about; all at the top of the speakers' voices and with shouts and derisive calls as if in the direst anger, but in reality with perfect good-humour.

"I can't quite recollect, though you can, sir, no doubt," resumed the man as we got clear again, "all the demolitions on the City routes—specially those in Holborn, before New Oxford Street gave us a straight run through; I mean when the 'buses had to pass round by the Church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, as I am told."

"Oh, yes," I answered, "there was a hideous pile of filthy tenements just across what is now the wide open entrance to Dudley Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, and another similar narrowing block at Middle Row opposite the end of Gray's Inn Lane. Dyott Street, the Rookeries of Old Bloomsbury and St. Giles's, the cut-throat holes and corners round about the present site of Hart Street and Mudie's Library, all are well within my memory. Of course you yourself have experienced the perils to man and beast on Holborn and Snow Hills before the Viaduct was built. What an abominable nuisance that dip down and up used to be—putting on the skid at the top, taking it off at the bottom, and yoking a third horse on to drag the 'bus up the greasy slope opposite. And talking of slippery roads, which do you prefer, asphalt or wood?"

"Neither, sir. Give me the old Mac-Adam; well kept, there's nothing like it. Nolay and jolting—yes, very likely, but I'm looking at it as a coachman. As for asphalt—that's an invention of the old 'un. It cost more horseflesh than any



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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

## All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

# CHARLES DICKENS.

PART 59.

### CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Through the Ranks. A Serial		The Grey Boy. A Short Serial	
Story ... 433, 457, 481, 505, 529		Story ... 503 525, 548	
Among the Black Mountains ... 439		Some Old Jamaican Churches ... 487	
Buried Treasure. A Pirate Yarn		National Emblems and Na-	
up to Date ... 443		tional Colours ... 490	
Our Ladies' Club ... 446		Only Jack. A Story in Two	
The Corinth Canal ... 449		Chapters ... 496, 515	
Zenobia: A Commonplace Girl.		Slang .. 510	
A Story in Nine Chapters ... 453, 477		An Autumn Eve. A Poem ... 515	
Dividend Day ... 462		Another View of Mashonaland ... 519	
The Candid Friend ... 465		Juggling ... 534	
Finis. A Poem ... 468		Winter in Holland ... 535	
A Study in Character. A		Mistress Sarah's Romance. A	
Complete Story ... 463		Complete Story ... 540	
Norwegian Folk-Lore ... 474		Old Jokes in New Forms ... 544	

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253 to 257

NEAVE'S FOOD FOR INFANTS

insisted — ay, regular insisted — I should go on all the way to Newcastle with them in the carriage where I was! —

“‘We’ll make up the difference for your ticket,’ says they—they were all friends—‘and you can give us a few wrinkles, no doubt. It will be better for you and better for us. Here, take a sandwich and a drop of sherry.’”

“One of them was opening a little refreshment-case. Nothing loth, I did as desired, after which cigars were produced, and we all sat there smoking and talking as comfortable as possible. Who would have thought such a pleasant beginning of a journey was to have such a terrible finish? But of a sudden, somewhere near Durham, without the slightest warning, bump goes the carriage, then it sways to and fro for a second, and the next second——”

What happened to the omnibus driver and his companions in that next second I never learned until weeks later. For by the strangest coincidence, just as he reached the cigar stage of his narrative, we had passed off the wood pavement on to some asphalt, and just as the words “the next second” were on his lips, the legs of the off-horse slipped clean from under him, landing him on his side; the ‘bus swayed to and fro ominously, stopped dead short, and the poor driver was pitched off his box head foremost. He struck against the one standing horse, and then, ricocheting against the other, fell heavily on to the asphalt. I should have lost my seat also, but for the rail in front, and it seemed a miracle that the whole concern did not capsize. It was the work of a moment, dus, I presume, to the sudden check given by the fallen horse. I don’t pretend to account for it otherwise. Nor, owing to the confusion that followed, and in the shouting of the crowd that gathered in less than two minutes, can I pretend to say what actually was said or done for some time. Beyond seeing that the driver was insensible and had to be lifted into a cab, I knew nothing. The other passengers on the top got off, so did I, slowly—so slowly that the cab had driven away with its helpless fare and a policeman to St. George’s Hospital before I again stood on terra firma. I could gather little from the crowd, but the conductor opined that his mate could not have had the strap from the back of his box buckled, as it ought to have been, round his waist to keep him in his seat.

“He always was an off-handed, high-minded toff,” said this red-faced janitor, without removing the straw he was smoking from his lips, “trying to skip up and down into his dickey as if he was twenty, instead of hard upon sixty as he is. I always expected to see him miss his footing and slip some day—that’s the way with these nimble ones—and now he’s been and half killed himself, poor cove, if he ain’t quite.”

Needless to say, I was greatly concerned, so I hailed a hansom and drove straight to St. George’s. My friend had received a concussion of the brain, and I did not see him again for six weeks. Then he told me he remembered nothing after finding himself toppling over, and will not believe to this day that he was in hospital so long. The conclusion of his story was scarcely less dramatic than the incident which cut it short. He took it up with a dogged conviction that he had recounted its beginning only a few hours before. However, he said one day when he resumed his narrative: “Well, sir, as I was telling you, we were all sitting smoking pleasantly enough, when bump goes the carriage suddenly, bump, bump, and the next instant there was a tremendous crash, and the gentlemen and myself were rattled about like pills in a box. Then the train came to a standstill. It was just getting daylight. We were none of us hurt, only shaken, so we got out, and there in front we saw that our engine had smashed into the tail of a goods train just lapping over on to our line from the siding into which it had been insufficiently shunted. But the curious and astonishing part of it was just this, sir. Not only was that lucky shot of mine at the first-class carriage at Peterborough the cause of my having the pleasantest journey I ever had in my life, but it actually saved my life. For will you believe it, sir, I say again, that very third-class carriage where I had been sitting as far as Peterborough, and which was close to the engine, was crushed up like a match-box. But for that cup of coffee and the delay in its coming, I should have been seated there again and of course killed. Ah, sir, it’s a curious world; I don’t pretend to understand these things or what regulates them.”

He is all right and at work again now. I often exchange nods with him on the road, but I have never soared to his

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER X. THE VOICE OF THE STORM.

MEANTIME, while stir and tumult were gathering over the country like a storm-cloud about to burst, the hush that precedes the footsteps of the quiet Angel of Death was falling upon the little shanty in the Shandon Valley. Patsey's tiny feet were entering the borders of that dark valley that each of us must pass through.

So very little of life's burden had been Patsey's, that one might have thought it but a small thing to lay down. And yet it seemed to cost a deal of trouble, and pain, and weariness in the process, and very tired was Patsey as the sleepless night grew to the dawning day, and the weary day died to eventide.

The poor cannot tend their sick quite as the rich do; there is the daily wage to be earned no matter who is sick, or who lies still with a sheet over the closed eyes that shall open no more in this world. The heart may be heavy and the eyes blind with tears, but the hands cannot be idle, and the tears must be dashed aside—since none can work and weep at the same time. Patsey's father loved his son quite as dearly as Major Henneker loved dainty little Missy, but he could not sit beside the wooden bed and hold the little burning hand in his for hours of the day, as the Major would have held Missy's had that household fairy been laid low. The outward manner of things varies, but the inner grace is the same.

It might have been noticed, about this time, that if the man went out late—when the shadows were deep in the narrow street, and the distant hills were blurs of grey against the black—he would step softly, nay, timorously, if such a word can be applied to such a shaggy specimen of humanity, lest poor Patsey should be aroused from that fitful stupor that sometimes soothed his pain. When he came in early—when the hills were black against the grey, and tiny birds were twittering softly in the hedges—he seemed to grow more timorous still; and, as he passed the little bed, faintly seen in outline in the scarce born light, would fumble in his bosom as though he made the sign that binds the world in one.

To bring trouble on himself, he did not care for that; but to bring trouble upon Patsey!

In fancy he heard the rhythmic ring of feet; the fall of the rifles on the floor at the word of command; saw the stern, set faces of men who recognised no power except that of duty—men who would fire on their own fathers or brothers if the word were given; saw a figure with a ghastly likeness to himself marching in between two others; saw little Patsey sitting up in bed with his skinny arms stretched out; heard his shrill, piping cry of "Daddy! Daddy!" heard it grow fainter and fainter and die into silence as the sound of the measured steps passed down the narrow street, away—away—into some strange new world.

The benediction spoken of old in Galilee upon the "little child set in the midst," still lingers like a ray of light, shining through the centuries; touching the golden hair of countless thousands, lighting up the innocent eyes, making the hardest



heart afraid in the offending of "one of these little ones."

The barrack square lay bathed in the rich autumn sunlight. Here and there it glinted on an awkward squad; young, untried soldiers driving old hands mad; getting tied up in knots, and having to be yelled straight again; but young and old alike wore scarlet coats, and the colour gleamed and glowed, and seemed to help the jocund aspect of the day.

About the big gateway hung various admirers of the show; spectators always to be seen gazing yearningly into any place where soldiers are, and upon whom the eye of the recruiting sergeant falls with a sifting and appraising energy.

Among these a ragged urchin shoved his hatchet-face well to the fore, his wide Irish mouth one huge grin of delight, as some unfortunate recruit came a worse cropper than the rest, and was shouted at with wilder vehemence and more energetic language.

"Arrah now!" screamed the boy, "hasn't he got the two lift ligs on him, the om-madhaun! See the arrums of him, how he carries thim sthickin' out like two sthakes in a hedge, an' the back of him that's like ould Maggie Flanagan's high-shouldered hin that got itself caught in a cog-wheel and dhisllocated its spine, begorra!"

The exultation of this last ejaculation was all too weak to express Tim's—for of course it was our friend—sense of joy; so he had to invert his small, lank body, and take three steps each way on his hands.

"Now then, young man, right way up, please, and off you go," said a smart young soldier, who was pacing up and down slapping his scarlet-striped leg with a dainty cane; "we don't want any one here playing soldiers upside-down—we don't."

Tim was all on fire in a moment.

"Oh, yer don't, don't yer!" he cried, striking an alarmingly warlike attitude. "Shure I'm as good a sol'ger as yerself any day of the week, praise be to the blessed saints all day and every day. Look here, now," and Tim drew himself up straight as a ramrod, shouldering an imaginary rifle, the while he sang out lustily:

Step in toime,  
And form the loine,

doing a small sentry-go of his own in really first-rate style.

"What are ye after, ye spawn o' the devil?" said Coghlan, coming rapidly out

of the yard at this juncture. "I'm just of a mind to think you're a d——d Fenian; so be off wid yourself before I give ye up to the guard and get yer blessed head took off before ye can snaze."

"He's a spoy—that's what he is," said another soldier standing near.

"I'm a spoy, am I, ye robber of the dead?" cried Tim, his spindle-shanks well apart, his tousled hair seeming to stand on end with rage. "Bad cess to ye for a lot of ill-mannered scoundrils, you'd like to see me wid the darbies on me, an' the mounted polis before and behind me—but I've more conduct than any of ye, and I'm come up here to seek a frind o' mine——"

The men were full of the soldier's easy laughter by this time, only Drummer Coghlan keeping a grave face on him.

"Who's your friend, eh?" said half-a-dozen voices, but Tim took no notice; he was staring straight in front of him across the square.

"Shure and here's the iligant gintleman as knows me, and will speak to my char-ack-ter befront of ye's all. . . ."

It was the Adjutant, and he came on slowly towards the gate, taking no heed of the little stir going on there; there is usually some sort of a stir going on at a barrack gate; the sentry shouldered arms, the Captain returned the salute, and then——

"Shure an' it's glad I am to see ye, Colonel, this blessed minute," said the unabashed and unabashable Tim. And Ellerton looked up to see the elfish figure of the boy, and to meet the joyous recognition of two twinkling eyes set in a sun-browned face; "shure ye haven't forgotten me, sor, nor the silver penny ye give me the time ye were bowin' the ladies about so ginteel; and another time didn't I show ye the way to the little church whin ye axed me——"

Captain Ellerton interrupted the boy curtly.

"I know the lad," he said to one of the men standing by; "what does he want?"

"An' how would the likes of him be after knowin' what I want?" said Tim, coming close, and peering up into Ellerton's face; "he's got no sinse—glory be!—but yer honour's a different case, an' I'll tell yer all the heart of it. It's Miss Alison I'm after, for poor Patsey he's all the time cryin' out for his own dear lady, an' Norah O'Connor she's knaling be the bed an' Patsey close hold on her gownd, the pains is that awful, an' she'll stay till the shadders cross the street, but then she'll

have to be after goin', for Mrs. O'Connor's took bad in her legs, an' cryin' out night and day—an' Phelim he's there too along wi' Patsey . . . an' the holy Praste, he's there too."

"There's enough of 'em, any way," growled Coghlan; and somehow the other men looked to the drummer to take the law into his own hands, and take the necessary step to let Miss Drew know of Tim's visit. The Hundred and Ninety-Third began to recognise the fact that Drummer Coghlan was, in a way, part and parcel of Major Henneker's establishment.

"Go across to Major Henneker's," said Captain Ellerton shortly, and away went Coghlan to seek out Eliza and warn her that her young mistress was wanted down in the valley.

The sun-light was beginning to pale as Alison and Elsie set off to see little Patsey. Both were very silent. There is something in the approach of death that falls upon the spirit as the darkness of night upon the world; that comes with a brooding, mysterious silence, as though the awe-struck soul were conscious of the added nearness of the world invisible.

It was touching to see Patsey's joy in the presence of his dear lady. He stroked her hand, and looked up lovingly into her grave, sweet face. Elsie had to go and stand at the little dingy window, pretending she could see something through it. Not much of life's discipline had come to Elsie yet. The heavy hand of sorrow had not been laid upon her, bidding her be patient and endure, as it had upon Alison. Her tears were ready as her smiles and laughter, and the music of her life was sweet. Presently it would hold deeper chords; and here and there a minor cadence.

Patsey had all his dear toys beside him. They stood upon an improvised table, an old hamper turned upside down, and covered with a bit of snow-white cotton stuff, that his mother had washed out, and then carefully bleached upon the hedge. They were having a holiday, those toys. The very white sheep were in their box, each animal wrapped in a tiny bit of cotton wool; the very green trees were each wrapped in a scrap of paper; but the lid was kept off so that Patsey could see them lying there if he liked to turn his weary little head that way. Every now and then he would touch them feebly; as he touched Phelim's head, that devoted creature wriggling his whole body in lieu

of his tail to testify his delight. Norah, those sad eyes of hers big with tears, knelt by Patsey's side.

"He's livelier than he was an hour or two since," said Patsey's mother to Alison; "onct I thought the life was out of him, an' I down on me two knees, prayin' the Holy Mother to howld him tight in her blessed arrums, but he opened his sweet eyes, an' 'Mother,' says he, 'I'm not gone,' says he, 'grip my hand,' says he, 'an' howld on to keep me a little while till I see my dear lady's face.'"

In a little while it began to grow dusk, and with many tender, loving words and gentle kisses to wee Patsey, the two girls set off home.

"It will not be long now," said Alison; "and oh, Elsie, what a thing it is to be thankful for that we have been allowed to brighten that poor little life, even ever so little! It is the one happiness that never fails us, no matter how deep our own sorrows may be, how desolate our own lives—the chance of bringing some little light into the dark places of the world."

"You must have felt very desolate, Alison, when your mother died."

Elsie's voice was rather catchy, but she felt constrained to satisfy a new longing to strive to see into the deeper depths of life.

"I felt as though the sun would never shine again—as though the flowers would all fade and wither. It was terrible, that weight of loneliness, when one's dearest and best has gone across the waters that no bridge may span—but I am making you cry with my sad talk, and here is Mr. Verrinder coming. He will wonder what is amiss."

But to their great surprise, Mr. Verrinder passed them with nothing more than a sweeping bow; and they noticed—even in that short glimpse of him—that all the fun and merriment seemed to have died out of his face, and his eyes were heavy and grave.

The cousins walked on in silence for a long time, and when at last Elsie spoke, it was a somewhat small, faint voice, and her remark had reference to nothing in particular; indeed, Alison passed it by unheeded, and struck out a line of her own.

"Elsie, do you think we can have offended Mr. Verrinder in any way? I should be so very sorry, he is such a good fellow. Dad says no one can think too highly of him, he is so straight."

"Straight or crooked, I suppose he has a right to be offended if he likes."

"Of course; but still, it seems so strange."

"I don't know of any law that obliges a Lieutenant to join the daughters of the Senior Major, if he meets them out walking, do you?"

"Elsie!"

"Well, if Mr. Verrinder is vexed with us, what does it matter, after all?"

"Nothing, of course."

Alison knew that when in one of those reckless humours it was useless to try and do anything with Elsie. And the grey dusk had by this time closed in upon them, so that she could not see the shimmer of tears in the girl's eyes.

Both were glad to see the lights of home shining in the windows, and a fairy figure—little Missy—all in white, with golden locks, making wild gestures of welcome from the head of the staircase.

"To see her like that, and then to think of little Patsey!" said Elsie. "It teaches me what it is to be thankful."

Then Alison knew that the reckless mood had passed, and found herself gently wondering what had given it birth.

Norah, too, had to set out homewards, and Phelim, torn in two by a longing to stay with Patsey, and a longing to go with his mistress, had, after an evident mental struggle, decided upon the latter course. It was that brooding time of evening when things that were objectionable from every point of view, and ought most certainly to be put an end to as promptly as possible, were most likely to be abroad, and Phelim set to work to harry them and make their lives as miserable as possible. He rushed hither and thither, sniffing into this crevice and into that, fancying the gleam of a rabbit's tail in every flicker, and making sure that a rat lurked in the shadow of every stone. At last, after a convulsion of scratching that covered his face with mould, Phelim succeeded in unearthing a wretched little mole, who had doubtless strayed from his mother's side and taken a fatal stroll towards the mouth of the domestic burrow. Phelim had no pity to bestow upon vermin; he would have wagged his tail if he could, as he bore the furry thing in his teeth, with intent to lay it at Norah's feet.

But there was no Norah to be seen. Still gripping the mole, Phelim turned his trot into an ambling canter, and so rounded a sharp turn of the road that was now both dusk and lonely.

There was his mistress at last, and by

her side a tall, dark figure, which Phelim no sooner saw than he dropped his dead prey, set up his bristly coat on end, drew up his lips in an evil grin, and set to walking on the balls of his feet, and lowering his head as he went. Then he growled ominously, coming so close to Captain Ellerton's heels—for the intruder was no other—that that gentleman gave him a vicious kick, thereby losing both dignity and sentiment.

"A little bird told me that you would be coming home this way to-night," said Ellerton, to the shrinking woman by whose side he walked; but Norah made no answer.

Her hand falling to her side grasped her beads, in a tense, nervous clasp, and she did not even let them go when, with a sudden movement, her companion passed his arm round her supple waist, and strove his best to look into her averted face.

Beneath his arm he could feel her heart fluttering like a bird in the hand of its captor; he could see the heavy rise and fall of her breast; he could say to himself that the rich, ripe tint of the oval cheek which was all he could see beneath the heavy, drooping braid of her rippling hair, was the loveliest he had ever seen; he could smile at her helplessness in his firm, unyielding grasp.

Though Ellerton could not see the girl's face, he could hear her muttering in a low and trembling voice:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God—Holy Mary. . . ."

Then he put his hand beneath her dimpled chin, turned her face towards him, and silenced the quivering lips with a kiss.

It seemed as though disgust gave her new strength. With a rapid movement she wrenched herself from his hold, sprang across the road, and stood—like some lovely animal at bay—with her back against the low stone wall that edged the road, and her hands clenched upon her bosom. The little red shawl she had worn snood-like on her hair fell back, and the full light of her great indignant eyes—indignant, yet never losing the sadness in their shining depths—blazed full upon him.

"Shame on you—and you an officer and a gentleman—to trate a poor girl so—shame upon you; for a coward, and an ill-conducted craythur at that! All my life I'll be hating the name of ye, an' the thought of ye."

"You look best and handsomest when you are angry," said her tormentor, quietly

watching her as the hunter watches the thing that he has trapped. "I've heard it said there are no eyes like your true Irish grey, and it's true, too; yours are as bright as stars this minute."

"I could curse them that they iver looked on ye," hissed the girl, shrinking as he came a pace nearer. "Do ye know I'm Harry Deacon's swateheart—sacred to him alone of all the world, an' him and I pledged to stand before the holy Praste?"

"I am jealous of this man Deacon," began the other, with calm irony.

"He wears the same colours as yerself, but don't disgrace them so," said Norah, looking round as one who seeks a chance for flight.

The red rose to Captain Ellerton's brow. To be told that you are a disgrace to your regiment is never a pleasant thing, however true it may be; and to be compared, unfavourably too, to a private soldier in your own corps, may be looked upon as decidedly trying.

"If Harry could see what you're after," continued Norah, too mad with rage and fear to be prudent, "he'd lay his hand across your face, and mark it. The saints be wid him every night and day, an' make him strong to do the right."

"You may be glad, then, my girl, that he isn't here," said Ellerton, who, to say the truth, began to wish himself out of an adventure that seemed likely to prove unpleasant. "If he were to strike an officer he would be shot down like a dog, as he has already, if my memory serves me right, been lashed like a dog."

With a bitter moan, and an indescribable gesture of loathing and contempt, she raised her hands to her face, and broke into a low, subdued sobbing, that yet shook her from head to foot, as the wind shakes the slim sapling.

"Hark, now, my girl," said Ellerton, "take a word of friendly counsel: keep a quiet tongue in your head to this Deacon, or he'll get into some trouble or other."

She lifted her face, and looked at him through the rain of her tears.

"Just one kiss more before I go; let us part friends, pretty one."

But he had scarcely uttered the last word, when with a glad cry Norah started forward—"Father—father dear, come to me!"

"I shall—I shall," said a hearty voice, and in a moment the white-haired old Priest of the little church on the hill had scrambled across the ditch with an

agility wonderful in one of his years, Phelim preceding him in one wild bound, and Norah was clinging to the good man's arm, sobbing as if her heart would break.

If Captain Ellerton had wished himself out of an adventure—undertaken more in the spirit of bravado, and the charm of entire novelty, than anything else—awhile ago, goodness only knows where he wished himself now. Yet precipitate flight was out of the question, for the man, though utterly unscrupulous in all that concerned the gratification of his own whims and fancies, was no poltroon.

"Who's frightened ye, then, Norah?" said the Priest, looking keenly and questioningly from one to the other. Then, as the true state of the case dawned upon his mind, he grew white and stern, drawing himself up with a dignity that Captain Ellerton was little prepared to see in one so simple in all outward seeming.

"Sir," said the grave, quiet voice of the old Priest, "I know not who you may be, and I do not seek to know, but this I know—you have been doing an ill work to be after frighting my child here, like this. You are a soldier, sir, as I can see by your bearing, and let me call to your mind that it is a soldier's part to protect women—not to insult them."

Ellerton flushed hotly. Some facts do sound so very unpleasant set forth in plain words. Still, he was determined to carry things off in as pleasant a manner as possible; and, strange to say, felt little or no resentment at the pastor standing by the lamb of his fold. The two formed, indeed, a dramatic and picturesque group that not a little pleased his eye.

Finding that the old man paused for a reply, Ellerton took a step towards him, and assumed a gentle, confidential air.

"Wouldn't you look upon it as what you call a venial sin, good father, to steal a kiss from a pretty girl?"

But the banter and the confidential air were alike lost upon Father John.

"You speak you know not what," he said solemnly; and something in the now bared head and uplifted hand made Ellerton feel ill at ease. He was himself an Irishman, and therefore at heart superstitious. He had the deep implanted dread of what he would have called "the evil eye;" he did not care to have some sort of anathema hurled at his devoted head, just because he had gone philandering in the green lanes after a pretty colleen.

"This child," said Father John, who had been silent awhile, swallowing his ire, "is plighted to one she loves with all her innocent heart—why should you violate the love that should be sacred? Sir, I do not mean to deal harshly with you, or to make a scandal that might end ill for all. I only ask you to go from this, and come no more here; I only ask you to give me your word that this shall be so. Sir?"

The old man's voice was now gentle and pleading, and somewhere, deep down in an undisciplined man's heart, it touched a chord that had been long silent.

"I give you my word," said Ellerton; for the life of him he could not bring his lips to add, "as an officer and a gentleman."

He was sorry in his heart of hearts as he stood there bare-headed before that simple pair, standing hand-in-hand in the opal-tinted gloaming, with Phelim looking up wistfully into their faces, as though hoping for some word of approval from them, that he had done well in seeking aid for his mistress in the hour of her distress.

And so he left them—words of regret upon his lips; words that he had never thought to utter to a simple peasant and a hedge-priest; words that were taken with such a gentle forbearance and courtesy as took away half their sting, and left no rancour of humiliation in his mind.

"Come, Norah," said Father John, laying his hand on the girl's shoulder, as Ellerton's tall figure disappeared round the turn of the road, "and mind ye say an extra Ave to-night; as to Phelim here—he's got the sense of a human creature in him—he told me of your extremity as plain as if he had the gift of tongues—pulling at my coat-tail—where I've a mind to think he's made a bit of a rent, too"—this looking ruefully over his shoulder—"and I cut over the field, him scurrying like mad, an' then I heard your voice, my child, full of distress, and by the help of the Lord, I leapt the ditch as if I'd only twenty years to carry, instead of sixty."

Then the two paced onward towards the shanty by the edge of the wood.

Meanwhile, Alison had found upon her table a small sealed letter. A hot flush coloured her cheek as she gathered it up and carried it to her bedroom.

She knew the hand so well—nay, she knew the tale the letter had to tell. It was signed, "yours faithfully, Hugh Dennison,"

a simple ending, maybe, but Alison knew all that it meant. As she read, the tears fell thick and fast. The writer prayed for delay. He wanted no sudden impulse of denial to have its way.

"Take time to think—weigh well the height and depth and truth of the love I offer"—that was the burden of the song he sang.

Well, she could give that much; she could give him time.

And all through the next day the consciousness of the letter locked in her desk, was with her like a living, haunting presence.

It was practice evening, and in one supreme moment a drama in which three characters—one woman and two men—were concerned, was enacted.

Hugh Dennison, losing hold over himself for an instant, gave one look of passionate entreaty at Alison, and that look was seen by the Colour-Sergeant of number one company—who, seeing it, paled even to the lips that suddenly showed grey under the sweep of the dark moustache, while his eyes, full of a haggard misery, told but too plainly the anguish of his heart.

No one noticed the acting of this drama from life. It passed like a shadow across a glass; but Alison played a false chord, and the doctor, calling a halt, regarded her with mingled reproach and wonder; while Mrs. Masters coughed an aggravating little cough, as who should say, "when I play the harmonium this sort of thing does not happen."

All day the wind had been rising, lashing the trees and bending their branches downwards to the river. Grey scud was hurrying across the sky overhead; and in the fields the cattle huddled under shelter, ready for the rain which they knew was sure to come, but which still held off. The practice was over; the harmonium had given its last groan, the lights in the chapel were out, and Gunner Grimes had turned the key in the lock with an uncompromising air, as of one who owned the whole place, and was answerable to Government for the safety of the entire building.

It was late for her to be out alone; and yet, down by the river, watching its tossing waters with strained and tearless eyes, was Alison Drew. In her pale grey gown she looked a fleck of light among the shadows that waved around her. She was not afraid that any one would come after her. If she was missed it would be taken

for granted she had gone to see Patsy. Long since she had secured to herself perfect independence of action, being one of those people who can do a great deal that others cannot. No one questioned her comings and her goings; no one wondered at anything she did. She was feeling the benefit of all this now, for she felt as if she must have stifled had she stayed indoors. Some horrible oppression was over her, some presage of coming ill. Sad indeed are those who dare not read what is written in their own hearts; whose only safety lies in blindness. The wind, ever rising, whistled and screamed, wrestling with the resisting trees; lashing the water so that the white foam flecked the brown.

And in Alison's heart a thousand stinging thoughts rose, and almost stifled her. The voice of the storm found an echo in her own heart.

"What is this that is over me!" she moaned, wringing her hands one in the other, her bonnet blown backwards, her face bared to the buffeting of the soft full blast. "What is holding me so that I cannot get free? Oh, Heaven! guide and help me in this my hour of need!"

The impulse of prayer yielded to its ever calming; some peace stole into Alison's soul, even as the fitful light of a broken moon stole through the rift of a cloud overhead, making a tiny ripple of silver on the tossing water at her feet. Gathering her cloak tightly round her, she sat her face homewards; but had scarce reached the low stone wall that edges the high banks that top the river when something very strange happened. A red glow rose and flickered; the staring arms of the trees on the cones of the hills showed black against the blaze of light, and from far away came the sound of a wild song that was like a cry.

#### AMONG THE BLACK MOUNTAINS.

THE person who knows nothing about the Black Mountains except their name may be excused for having a somewhat gloomy idea of them. The idea, however, does them an injustice. They are no more funereal in hue than other mountains. Even in winter, when they may be supposed to be most awe-inspiring, they are white rather than black.

Seen in the fog end of spring, as I saw and made intimate acquaintance with them, these hills are, indeed, a joy to

the susceptible pedestrian. They are then clad with heather, which, at that time of year, is not a very bright sort of vestment; but the glow of the young bracken and the even tenderer colours of the whortleberry plants, to be seen in patches by the acre, quite neutralise the more sombre effect of the heath. You must moreover drape the inner dimples of their sides with silvery cascades, and fill their valleys with verdure of an assorted kind, from buttercupped meadows to hawthorn and walnut trees. Add a sprinkling of white cottages to the valleys, make these melodious with bird music, and set a radiant sun in the cloud-flecked sky, and you may conceive that this little tract of England and Wales has its allurements.

The mountains occupy a corner of three counties—Hereford, Monmouth, and Brecknock. The most ordinary excursion in them, that from Abergavenny to Llanthony, leads you from Monmouth towards Brecknock; nor need it occupy anything like the greater part of a day. And what a memorable little jaunt it is, whether you take it in the hired car, your own phaeton, on a cycle, or with your own unaided legs! The whole area of the Black Mountains may be reckoned up roughly as but about fifteen miles by ten. It may be said to consist of five irregular ridges running north-west from Abergavenny, with five main valleys and innumerable lesser combes. The greatest elevation of the mass seems to be Waunfach, on the Gader Ridge, two thousand six hundred and sixty feet high. But it is not a conspicuous peak. The Ridge just raises a pimple a hundred feet or two above its general summit, and the world has christened the pimple Waunfach. The Sugarloaf, by Abergavenny, though less than two thousand feet high, is much more assuming, seen from the Usk valley, than Waunfach.

I started for my Black Mountain tramp from Brecon, about twenty miles from Abergavenny. It is an unaccountable thing that there is no direct railway down the Usk valley between these towns. The distance is but twenty miles by the road. As I travelled, however, the journey required nearly three hours of railway. It would have been tedious but for a companion, and the very great charm of the wooded mountain sides and valleys at the beginning and end of the journey.

Of my companion, I must really say something. He was, from his own report,

a millionaire. I met him at the Brecon hotel, where he ate fried bacon with his trout. We chanced to breakfast together at an untimely hour, and subsequently to travel together. I had a third-class tourist ticket; but my companion, being a millionaire, troubled himself not at all about tickets and took me with him, first class. He had words to exchange with countless persons at the various stations in the iron district although which we passed. It was about coal one minute, iron the next, then house property; stocks and shares, and other industries filled up the gaps. Between whiler, the worthy fellow, who wore a most desirable diamond on one of his fingers, and a smaller—but also very desirable—jewel in his scarf, told me more of his personal history than I had the right to expect to hear. Forty years ago, he had been a plain mechanic in a railway shed. Now he was what he was—the god of a surprising number of men's admiration, and a member of the Imperial Institute to boot. He told me that having worked hard in the days of his early manhood, he proposed now to enjoy himself without stint. I judge he began to do that a year or two ago. He had lately travelled much in America, and never without a six-shooter. Try as I would, however, I could not induce him to impart to me an adaptable recipe whereby I too might become a millionaire. At a venture, I imagine that land speculations had raised him. He hinted as much when he told how seven years ago, being made guardian to an orphan with two thousand pounds, he invested the sum in land in Cardiff. "Last week, mister," he added sententially, "I parted with that land for that orphan for seventeen thousand pounds." Happy orphan to have had such a guardian! I thought. But I could as little persuade my friend to tell me where the orphan lived—I gathered it was a marriageable young lady—as lead him to give me practical assistance on the high road to wealth. "Now, mind you," said the good gentleman to me at parting, "you're to have a knife and fork with me when you come my way. Just book that, will you?" I did book it, and parted from the millionaire with a feeling of indefinable regret like that left in the mouth after the all-too-briak dissolution of an expensive caramel.

By the way, I must try a little fried bacon with my next trout. It seems a most profane alliance. But a millionaire is sure

to know what is good. And so I leave the suggestion with the reader.

Then from the hot train—a first class carriage in May is the favoured vehicle of fleas—I walked gladly into the lanes of Llanvihangel, and set my face towards Llanthony. All was peaceful and green and odorous and beautiful. Here I was only on the outskirts of the Black Mountains, but their rounded inoffensive shapes were before me. I was by the River Honddu, a mild brook after so long a drought, with kine bathing themselves in it ankle deep. It behoved me to follow this deep-set little stream, to its confluence with another mountain rivulet under the walls of the monastic retreat of our famous modern Benedictine, Father Ignatius, ten miles away. The prior of New Llanthony has snugly nested himself. A pilgrim must, even in the gay summer time, be well shod and stout of heart to approach the reverend house, knowing that he will have to return thence for his bed. No man, not even a millionaire, could be more stoutly protected against the assaults of the idly curious or the professional scoffer. Of Father Ignatius, however, and his monastery more anon.

The sun was torrid, but a sweet breeze blew down the valley in my face. The old joy of walking under such glorious conditions soon possessed me. I would not for a time have exchanged my feelings for those of a millionaire at their most ecstatic pitch. The mountain shapes little by little enlarged themselves about me, and the glen narrowed. There were hyacinths enough under the hedges, which in their turn were sprayed with crimson and white dog roses and honeysuckle. The walnut trees, whose summits soared to my level from the banks of the Honddu, were of a size rare in England. There were firs and pines in plantations on the hillsides, and the cuckoos sang from them. Bees buzzed around me, and yellow-hammers flitted coquettishly, cock and hen, from hawthorn twig to hawthorn twig, about two yards before me. The heavens were as kind as blue sunlit sky and fleecy clouds could render them. And for three miles I met not one living person. The mellowed pedestrian asks no fairer fortune from Heaven than this.

I passed one slip of a hamlet, Cwmyoy, on the other side of the stream, perilously near, as it seemed, to the broken face of the mountain above it.

But though there were houses and a

church and fly-troubled cattle in the lane leading to the bridge over the Honddu, human inhabitants there seemed none. For this, of course, I cared not. My road was unmistakable. I did not crave the confidences of any garrulous rustic. I did not even thirst for beer or milk. And I knew that, before long, old Llanthony would show itself.

Ere coming to the Abbey, however, I was met by a plaintive man in a cart. He stopped and expressed humble sorrow at being so late. I knew no more than the man in the moon what he meant. But later it appeared that my knickerbockers made him claim me for a certain fisherman whom, with his flies and rods, he ought to have carried up the glen from the railway station an hour back. I sent him on his way, and welcomed the broadening of the valley, which indicated that the old-time abode of the comfort-seeking solitaries was at hand. The mountains nowhere wore a fairer tapestry of clouded and velvety green; nowhere were the meadows so luxuriant, and the blackbirds so tuneful. And there could have been no more delightful contrast with all this warm exuberance than that given by the black yew trees behind which stood up the rugged outline of the broken monastery walls.

A puny post office; a white cottage or two amid the greenery by the brook; a tiny church with decayed beams, which a clerical gentleman and a mechanic were inspecting from a ladder; an inn, and the ruins: these together make up Llanthony.

To be precise, the inn and the ruins are one. Of old the prior had his residence in the modern guesthouse. Kitchen and dining-room nowadays let straight upon the sward, shadowed by the monastic walls. But everything here is of a very unpretentious kind. There was doubtless even on fast days more cheer in the kitchen of the monastery than you will find in the kitchen of the inn. An artist could be seen in an upper room, plying his brush, with his subject before him. An aged man was spudding among the peas and cabbages in the monastery garden. A child rolled on the tombstone of an abbot, and a crowd of reckless poultry strolled hither and thither in quest of worms or grains. These apart, I had the ruins to myself, as I had had the Black Mountains' road. But ere my modest outlets were cooked, I was joined

by two middle-aged persons from London, who, having potted about among the stones a little, and stared at the blue sky which domed them, also joined me at the dinner-table. They were not of the common kind of tourists, these two. There was no frivolity and but little enthusiasm in either of them. Over the meat they talked with me in Johnsonian phrases. I imagine their interests were half theological and half mercantile. If you can conceive two mild haberdashers on a preaching tour, you will have an idea of their personality.

But, having lunched, I had no time for mere speculative disquisitions. From the old monastery I meant to proceed to the new—four miles higher up the glen. And afterwards I had to scale the mountains and pass along the broad platform which unites all the ridges of the Black Mountains at their northern end, and so drop as best I could towards Llangorse Lake in the west. It was an ambitious programme, and I might fail to fulfil it, but I proposed to try.

I had walked for another hour, I suppose, always ascending, with a fine pyramidal mountain before me, standing at the meeting place of two ravines from the north, when I heard the tinkle of a church bell. The blackbirds that had erstwhile been carolling seemed to hold their notes until the bell had sung its lay. The effect of this melody in these mountain wilds was exquisite. I stood and listened to it, and dropped my cigarette in the spiritual absorption of the act. Then the bell ceased, the birds continued their chants, and I proceeded on my way. The modern monastery could not but be near.

Yet before I came to it I had to make acquaintance with one more little hamlet—that of Capel-y-ffin. What a sequestered, pretty little spot it occupies. There is an ancient church about as spacious as a rich man's dining-room, low, and with a most unobtrusive bell tower; the whole girdled by jetty yew trees which almost hide from view the leaning tombstones in its burial-ground. The mountains rise on all sides of it, and the Honddu receives its chief tributary by its walls. A few white cottages are scattered up the glen, with fields of clover and buttercups betwixt them and some high old trees where the moisture is most pervasive. The pyramidal mountain already noticed bears a conspicuous cross of stones on its summit and dominates the scene.



Hence to the monastery on the hillside it was but a step or two up the right bank of the Honddu's tributary. A trim wall appeared, with spruce firs hugging it methodically. A stone portal showed itself, capped by a crucifix bearing the word "Pax," inscribed "The Abbot's Gate," and marked with the frigid phrase, "Private Entrance." And looking over the stone wall, I looked upon a well-conditioned garden of pot herbs and vegetables, in which sundry bare-headed young men in black cassocks were tolling gently with their hoes. The high roof of a chapel rose above the garden and a pleasant house was alongside, having a gable, cross-crowned, beneath which a black and white bow-window bulged prettily forwards. The sun shone over all, and the breeze blew freshly from the mountain waterhated to the north. Everything seemed saturated with this sweet word "Pax."

Now I knew that this modern reviver in England of an old social and religious habit did not favour the presence of ordinary strangers in his tranquil little domain. The guide-book told me that. Nevertheless, and because I was thirsty—a poor pretext, since the mountains teemed with ice-cold springs—I approached the monastery as bold as a baker delivering his ordered loaves. A blue construction of wood, neatly nailed round, in a pink and yellow meadow, excited my curiosity. But I would not climb the fence to see it at close quarters. I walked on to the chapel door, which was open. At sound of my footsteps a stir arose among the brethren in the garden. They leaned on their hoe handles and looked at me. One, a dark young man, seized a barrow and trundled it upwards so as to arrive at the chapel porch before me. The others stood and watched the issue.

But nothing sensational happened. I saluted the dark young brother, whose finger nails were no blacker than was to be expected, and he avowed that he saw no reason why I might not enter the chapel. It would indeed have been odd if he had. And so I sat in the incense-perfumed coolness and looked at the Madonna on the altar, and the red-hilled altar carpet, and the sunlit verdure of the garden. The high altar was screened off, but through the screen its many candles and the burning lamp before it were visible. A few minutes passed thus refreshingly, and the young brother returned to say that any information I required would be afforded me at the

monastery. I have a sad unconscious trick of looking most angelic when really I am but gnawed by curiosity. Hence I imagine this intimation; for why might I not have been a nobleman in mufti, with the monastic instinct ebullient in me?

Then I receded and rang the monastery bell. The door was wide open, so that I might have entered and at least rested in the vestibule, where were chairs, religious pictures, words, and symbols, and shelter from the sun. The monastery dog in his kennel outside did not so much as part his eyelids at me. His nose hung over the threshold of his house, and he seemed to be dreaming blissfully. I rang again and yet again. Then, with youthful impetuosity, Father Ignatius himself appeared, greeted me, insisted that I should be refreshed, and departed; to be succeeded in two or three minutes by one of the cassocked young men, who promptly shut the door and held formal converse with me through a grating about two inches by two. He had yellow teeth, that is all I can tell of him. His enquiries were such as might have been expected. Whence came I? whither went I? and wherefore did I appear at the monastery? Three little rustic urchins trooped round with school-books, and I heard the genial voice of the prior cry to them: "Good-bye, dear boys." Another young man in a cassock followed the boys, and expressed himself willing to be my guide until the tea hour, when, it was hoped, I would be their guest.

But alas! I could not tarry for tea. Nothing would have given me greater pleasure. I have eaten snails and drunk wine with Greek monks; and have been stroked on the head by an attenuated Italian devoted to a life of mortification and begging for "centesimi." I would dearly have liked to see how these young Englishmen carried themselves in community; but I had many miles before me ere I could consider my day's walk at an end, and it was already past four o'clock.

My new guide therefore took me hurriedly into the pilgrims' refectory, where I was regaled with limejuice; thence into the visitors' parlour—a bright room with books, portraits of Her Majesty, writing materials, and pictures, but with no view from it—and then, having peeped at the corridor of cubicles for downright pilgrims, we descended into the open. The books in the visitors' room were not all mere spiritual "pabulum." There were novels among them with well-frayed edges.

And so we walked towards the outer track together. The blue woodwork in the meadow thus came into view again.

"What is it," I asked, "a tomb, or what?"

"Not a tomb! We want no graves here. One does not die at Llanthony," was the reply.

I apologised for my curiosity, but made no attempt to control it.

"Oh, it is," said my guide at length, "the place of the apparition. That was before my time. When there is money enough, something more suitable will be substituted for it."

"Our Lady of Llanthony" may by-and-by therefore become an accredited wonder-working cult in the Black Mountains.

At the outer gate I parted with my kindly cicerone and made for the heights. The chapel bell tinkled again, this time but faintly, for the wind carried its music away from me.

In a few minutes I caught up the three little urchins who had been to afternoon school at the monastery. They had nothing but good words to say of the "reverend father's" treatment of them; nor can aught save the old Adam of human nature—perhaps in the shape of a liquor-loving sire—be held accountable for the gleeful remark of the oldest of them when I gave them a penny apiece: "It'll get us two glasses of beer!" On consideration, the child thought that either toffee or a "good book" might be better for his soul's salvation than home-brewed ale.

It was past five o'clock, and I still had ten rough miles to travel, the greater part aided by compass and sun alone. They were gloriously bracing miles. From the monastery level (about one thousand one hundred feet above the sea), I ascended gradually the plateau whence the mountains fall in parallel ridges to the south and in abrupt terraces to the north. I had the heathery upland to myself. Here and there were sheep and ponies; naught else. From the summit of the plateau (some two thousand feet up), the Wye valley broke into view, the gleaming thread of the river bounded on the other side by hills above hills to the horizon.

Hence, shortly, the angular peaks of the Brecon Beacons were visible in the west. They served as my guide, for the Lake of Llangorse lies between them and the Black Mountains. I hit the right slope for my purpose. "Y Crib" it is called, which, being interpreted, means "the

edge." From no standpoint could I have had a finer retrospect of the general character of the mountains I had done with. Y Crib is a long narrow mountain promontory, dropping sharply to the cultivated land at the base of the hills. There was something of grandeur in the dark coombes on either hand, with the pencilling of bright green where spring water gushed from the mountain sides. There is a Castell Dinas at the extremity of Y Crib. The remains of the citadel still stand and guard the pass, which is now merely a highway from one village to another.

At eight o'clock I was still trudging towards my bourne, though with lessened enthusiasm. It seemed to me that Llangorse village would never be reached. The glitter of the lake had shown in the bottom of the valley twice or thrice, and then disappeared. I passed from lane to lane, ever descending, and ever with the Brecon Beacons before me. One of these lanes was more remarkable than the rest. It was exceedingly narrow, and steep, and rough—a mere cow path, in fact; but the trees grew entirely across it, and the banks on either hand were as full of ferns as if a collector had purchased the domain and planted it at his pleasure. It was like a lane of the tropics for its beauty, though less luxuriant. The invigorating coolness and damp of it were, however, emphatically English sensations. A crimson flicker of the sunset shone through the canopy of its leaves, for one moment transfiguring it and myself.

A few minutes later I was in Llangorse village, and the children playing before the church and bestriding the brook bridge briefly suspended their antics to stare at the apparition of a stranger. But the "Red Lion Inn" received me in its prim little parlour and hid me from their sight; and old Amor, that famous fisherman of Llangorse, came forward in his time-stained velveteens to say that the morrow would be a capital day for fishing the lake with him—in one of his boats.

## BURIED TREASURE.

A PIRATE YARN UP TO DATE.

"WHAT!" cried the seedy stranger; "you don't believe in buried treasure? Wall, I swar! Ain't such things? Cost more to find than they're worth! Why, the greatest stake I ever played was for buried treasure.

"Where shall I begin, now—let's see.

Wall, I was in love—right in up to the neck. She was a nurse in the hospital. I was a useless orphan gump, with a thousand a year of my own. Says Alick, 'I'm a pro in this here hospital, earning twenty dollars a year. What are you?' 'Three saloons,' says I—'livery stable, and mortgage on the First Baptist Church.' 'What d'ye do?' says she. 'Hang around,' says I. 'Then don't hang around me,' says she. Tell you that was a sickener. However, I tried again the next year. Says Alick, 'I'm a staff nurse in this here hospital and boss of the surgical ward. What are you?' 'I love you,' says I. 'Well,' says she, 'staff nurses ain't to be had at the price. Sheer off; go and do something.' I just went around back streets, and kicked myself home.'

"That night I was packing up to go West, when I came across a sheaf of Pa's old letters, and began to burn 'em one at a time in the stove. Presently I lit on a document writ by my grandmother Saphira Burns, 'being a narrative dictated by my husband, Zachariah P. Burns, of Millstoneville, Connecticut, a retired pirate, late deceased, having been run over and killed by an omnibus in New York, and lyeth in Greenwood Cemetery, for which the said omnibus company disclaimeth liability, having been intoxicated, and now waiteth in confident expectance of a glorious hereafter. Given under my hand.'

"Well, you bet, I pricked up my ears, 'specially when I seen that the whole bloomin' yarn was about a buried treasure. Grandpa Zachariah must have been a double-barrelled terror. Why, at nineteen, being third mate of a whaler, he mutinied; made his own cousin by marriage, Captain Eliphalet W. Stiggs, walk the plank; swore in the crew over a Russian almanack and a bloody dagger; hoisted the black flag; and started in business as a buccaneer. At first he scuttled coasters in a small way along the Ohilanean coast; afterwards, when he had lost his ship on the Gallipagoes, took to annexing whalers when they put in for water. Altogether, what with marooning, ransoms, and deep-sea captures, he was making a pretty good stake, when, as luck would have it, trade slackened, money got tight, dividends down to nothing—in short, the crew got up on their ear and mutinied.

"When the ringleaders found Zach, he was sitting in the middle of the cabin on a barrel of gunpowder, armed with dozens

of pistols. They told him to come down off that barrel.

"'I'll be hanged if I do,' says Zach.

"'That's so,' said the ringleader, who was a truthful man.

"'Now,' says Zach, 'I'm bossing this show. You're going to head her for Panama—nor-nor-east-b'-east—and if you ain't dropped anchor by seven bells of the morning watch, I'll blow her up by George, and this time to-morrow you'll be arranging for your lodgings down below!'

"Yes, sir, compass in the beams overhead, water and food within reach; why he'd got the dead bulge on the whole outfit! The crew chuckled on deck, thinking how they'd carve up Zach when he started for to go ashore; and Zachariah chuckled in the cabin, for when they anchored at Panama Bay he wouldn't quit his barrel unless the new Captain was given up to him as hostage, till such time as he reached the dry land.

"With a pistol in each of the leader's ears he marched up on deck, and went down into the boat. While all the crew hung gaping over the bulwarks, while a slow match fizzed in the cabin, Zachariah P. Burns went safely ashore with his hostage. Yes, there he stood on the beach till the new Captain went back aboard, saw him welcomed by the crew on deck, saw the boat hauled up—then bang went the ship, and for some minutes the air was plumb full of hurtling scraps of pirate. Zachariah remembered that he was a Connecticut man, and felt quite pleased with Connecticut.

"Ever hear of Lafitte—the Pirate of the Gulf? No? Then you'd oughter. Zach found him at Colon, anyway, outfitting for the fall trade; joined on, shipped as his second mate; and I tell you they made things hum in the Mexican Gulf! Business was booming; why they got so proud that when they spent a Sunday afternoon shark-fishing, nothing would satisfy 'em for bait but live Jesuit missionaries! Mind you, Lafitte was dead nuts on theology—listen by the hour to any sky pilot as happened along—but as he said, 'Romans is pizen!'

"Well, during the war of 1812, old man Zachariah must needs fall out with Lafitte. British General—Pakenham his name was—wanted the Captain to come along and help capture New Orleans. Zach's eyes fairly glittered when he thought of all the loot.

"'It's a great scheme!' says he.

"'Won't work, Zacb,' says Lafitte, 'the bloomin Britlaher's jolly well going to get licked. I'm going to turn patriot and help give him beans. I'm after a free pardon from the Yanks—you bet'

"'Patriotism be blowed!' says Zachariah.

"On the way to New Orleans they had to put in for water at the Bayou Teche. Soon as they dropped anchor, and the people were away with the water breakers, Captain Lafitte calls away the jolly-boat and starts out with Zachariah and two ordinary seamen on a little picnic. After some miles they pulled over to an island, where they spent the whole night landing a thundering big iron chest full of gold and jewels. Enough to make your mouth water: chalices and crucibles, patens without end, snuff-boxes, chains of rolled gold, with eighteen carat fixings, earrings, necklets, tararas, diamonds, candlesticks—and—etc. Buried it in the beach—yes, of course above high water mark, smoothed the place over, and murdered the ordinary seamen—which had been selected as the two most useless men aboard.

"'Now,' says Lafitte, 'we can go on to New Orleans with a clear conscience.'

"Next morning when they were about a mile or so at sea, the Captain sent Zachariah aloft to do some kind of monkey business with the fore royal yard-arm. When Zach got to the place, he found the foot rope cut neatly away at the outer end till it hung by a thread. 'I see,' says Zachariah.

"Now you must understand that they were in a shallow bay, about a mile and a half out, a big eddy swirling along-shore. While Zach was taking it all in, the Captain sung out:

"'You goin' to stay there all day? Why don't you get a hump on, you darned old wreck of a purser's pig—you brass-mounted, brazen-headed jackass—you—!—!—!'

"'Ay, ay, keep your shirt on, governor!' so saying Zach stepped on the foot rope.

"'Man overboard!' yelled the Captain. Zach came down with an awful smack in the water. The sly old fox! While Lafitte lay to lowering away the boats, Zachariah let himself float gently with the current till they could barely see where he was. Then, kicking off his sea boots, he suddenly let out a piercing yell, waved his arms like a windmill, and sank. He was never seen again from the pirate ship.

"Drowned? Drowned nothin'! He was

simply swimming under water, putting up his nose when he needed a sniff of air. In half an hour he landed at the point of the bay, hauled ashore like a seal, and hung himself out to dry. Lafitte had called in the boats and squared away for New Orleans.

"'Nothing like trusting your friends,' says Zachariah.

"Dig up the treasure? No; went straight to Mobile, Alabama. There, while he was hiring a sloop to carry the spoil away, the old man must needs fall in love. The lady was young, pretty, widow, four hundred a year—married within a month, and off to New York for the honeymoon.

"Happily ever after? No, he was run over and killed by an omnibus.

"No omnibuses then? Well, tell the story yourself! Then shut up! There—gone—slams the door, of course—and a good riddance.

"Lafitte? Ran the Britishers out of New Orleans—free pardon from Legislature and a vote of thanks—got religion, and went into the slave trade.

"Treasure? Now if it had been pork and molasses, I guess—well, he'd have done well in the corner grocery line; but diamonds and jewels—no. I guess, stranger, that down in Louisiana swamps they're hungering more after religion and quinine than any earthly gauds.

"Dead and gone this long time? Yes. Lafitte lived at his island years and years. Nights he used to go down with a spade and lantern, dig up the treasure, gloat awhile, say his prayers to it, and bury it in again. Never fed himself—couldn't afford it. They say he died of want.

"But his ghost keeps up the old regular habits. Yes, sir, every night regular comes down the beach—tall, thin, clammy, with lantern and shovel—to dig there for hours in the sand. You don't believe? Wall, now I do, for I've seen him!

'Yes, you're right. I took Grandma Saphira's document, Zachariah's map, the proceeds of my three saloons, mortgage, and livery stable, and started out within a week for Louisiana. Not that I believed in the treasure. No, but with a broken heart one must hustle around and do something, or there's danger of what'd'ye-callum setting in. So at Mobile, Alabama, I chartered a sloop and started out with two hired men, fishing. Yes, camped on an island near the Bayou Teche, and fished. Talk—talk—talk—I thought those two idiots would never quit jawing.

Why, it was nearly midnight before they curled up in their blankets; but at last they talked themselves to sleep. My chance was come. I stole away, crossed the island, then followed along the shore till I found my bearings. Dark as a coyote's throat. I could just make out the two rocks up by the timber, when suddenly the moon broke out, and, as I live, there was a man—a tall, dark man—with a lantern and spade digging!

"My teeth rattled. I was perspiring like a pitcher of iced lemonade. I was gone in the knees, something horrible crawling down my back. For there he was, with a face like a death's head and bony hands, digging away in the sand, as though he'd never come to the bottom. At last he struck the chest. I could hear the cling of his shovel on the lid. He heaved up the top, rummaged around, took something out, which he wrapped in what looked like a shroud. Then the great lid came down with a clang. I could stand no more, but lit out along the beach like all possessed, and crawled back, limp as a rag, to camp.

"Next day I let my men into the secret, for I was ready to share up now, if only for the sake of human company. Moike said:

"'It's all my ol. O'm an American citizen. Can't take me in wid ghosts av ould wives' tales, begorra!'

"As to Hans, he'd have no truck mit der teufel. Nod much—no.

"Howbeit, for five hundred dollars apiece they helped me out, seeing that I was a friend. We waited till eleven o'clock, liquored up, and crossed over to the place. Yes, there he was, digging, just as I'd seen before. We watched him open the chest and take something out. Again the great heavy top of the chest came down with a clang. Then we waited till the sand was filled in, and the ghost stole back to the woods. 'Now,' says I, 'is all this granny's tales?' There wasn't a word from the Irishman, for he'd skipped the country; but the Dutchman lay grovelling. 'Der teufel!' he yelled. 'dake me home.'

"I couldn't stand it. The whole thing was a regular swindle. This treasure—mine by rights—was being stolen away piecemeal night after night by a pirate's ghost. I dragged the Dutchman up, shook him, and filled him with whisky. We came down out of the woods with a whoop and a yell; we dug up the sand with our

nails; we lifted the heavy chest out of its hole, and had started to drag it away, when a voice rang out of the woods that knocked me cold:

"'Say, there, what in thunder are you doing with my meat safe? Can't a man bury his food away from a tropical sun without being plundered by white trash? Hands up, you idiots, or I'll shoot!'"

### OUR LADIES' CLUB.

"THERE is nothing new under the sun!" So we northerners were constrained sorrowfully to admit when we found that our Club, which we had fondly imagined to be thoroughly "fin-de-siècle," had been forestalled, certainly in America, probably, too, in London and the larger English cities.

A good many seasons ago now it was, that a batch of us—all girls fresh from school, and fired with the thought of becoming world-famed painters—joined together throughout a whole summer in order to go on various sketching expeditions. I cannot say that we all made great progress in our art; but undoubtedly some of us did, and the rest of us made up for our lack of talent by a plentiful reserve of high spirits and healthy appetites. My own particular chum, I remember, had a knack of turning everything into sunshine. No matter how the clouds might be lowering overhead, her skies were always blue; and the number of sixpences she must have expended on tubes of cobalt, ultramarine, and cerulean blue, is quite frightful to contemplate.

For my part, I shall never forget the tussle I had that summer with a stream called the Corbie. Bent upon business, I had pitched my camp on a flat rock right in the middle of the running water. It was just above the bit known as the Lynn, at which the Corbie, hemmed in on either side by steep banks, collects its forces and takes sundry bounds down make-believe cataracts with a very creditable boom and rush. With my folding-easel firmly fixed in tufts of grass, I faced directly down stream, and set myself to transfer these pigmy falls to my canvas. But to my utter astonishment I found myself compelled to make the water, instead of flowing down, flow up my picture from bottom to top; and although in my own opinion I succeeded in overcoming this tremendous difficulty and reproducing the

scene with singular fidelity, no one to whom I ever showed the painting could be induced to see it in its proper light. "It is very nice," they would say politely, "but of course the water here"—pointing to the top of the canvas—"is certainly above the water down there;" and any attempts at explanation on my part seemed only to have the effect of bewildering them. I discovered later on, of course, on applying to the proper authorities, that the task to which I had set myself was an impossible one; and that not all the King's horses nor all the King's men—that is to say, not all the Royal Academicians and their Associates put together—could have tackled successfully that stream from that point of view. But I have always dated from that period the decadence of my enthusiasm for the artist's career.

However, it was the members of this sketching party of which I have been speaking who were to form the nucleus of our Ladies' Club.

Winter came and rough weather, and sketching had now become out of the question. How then were these young geniuses to pursue untrammelled their serious studies? The idea of hiring a studio was mooted, but before it had even been fairly considered there flashed from some one intellect—I am bound to say that I believe it to have been an unconcerned, masculine one—the brilliant suggestion, why not a Ladies' Club? Immediately half-a-dozen young minds were busy with the ways and means, the absolutely necessary, the possibly to be done without. You must remember that the whole scheme was to us entirely new. If the Women's University Club was in New Bond Street then, we did not know it; if the Somerville already existed, its fame had not reached our northern habitations. We were enabled thus to give full play to our inventive faculties, so long at least as our plans kept within the limits of our by no means too long purses.

It was speedily decided that we must have a studio and a reading-room, that the annual subscription should not exceed one guinea, and that the election of a Lady President (our tender years taken into account) was absolutely indispensable. Behold us, then, discussing the merits of all the likely matrons in our native town, regardless of the consideration as to whether they would or would not take gladly the exalted position to which we contemplated raising them.

I have often thought that the lady on whom our choice eventually fell was the one of all others best fitted to make our Club the success it became. Of a distinctly intellectual turn of mind, brimful of energy, delighting in the society of young people in the absence of any family of her own, she espoused our cause with ready enthusiasm. Almost immediately we had enrolled a sufficient number of prospective members to ensure our solvency; had taken rooms at a rental of fourteen pounds a year, purchased a square of carpet, some chairs, and small tables, and last, but not least, a stamp with a lever handle to enable us to date triumphantly our letters and envelopes from the Ladies' Club—a piece of plant which had been our dream and our desire since first the great project was set on foot—and had applied ourselves to making our quarters inhabitable.

Never shall I forget our first steps in this direction. By way of being economical, we had determined to stain the floors ourselves; but oh! the weary, back-breaking tedium of the process. From morn till dewy eve, with all the energy of despair, did we poor geniuses wield the great brushes prescribed for the occasion; and even then but half of our heavy task was done. I remember that my right hand looked exactly double the size of my left one, and that I crept homewards in such a manner as to suggest that I was suffering from a violent attack of lumbago. My companions, I have no doubt, were in precisely the same condition. What wonder, then, if, after all that, we threw economy to the winds and called in a painter to do the varnishing.

For the rest, the furnishing of the rooms was very simple. We, the promoters, supplied all deficiencies in loans from our own homes. Rugs and table-covers, fenders and curtains, all the little odds and ends necessary for our purpose took their places as if by magic in the Club premises. I must mention that we had secured the second (which was also the top) floor of a medium-sized corner house, that our studio, with its northern exposure and its large skylight, as well as other windows, was, and is, the admiration and envy of our local artists; and that, in addition to a capacious reading-room, we were fortunate enough to have got a very decent-sized cloak-room at the head of the stairs; from all which it may be deduced that rents in our favoured city are not unnecessarily

high. By the generosity of our President, a box capable of holding one bagful of coals was fitted into the angle of the staircase, and thus we were completely equipped for our winter's work.

But here exactly came in the humour of the situation. With us, work meant play; but for our President work was work. Her husband, by sheer force of brain power, had made for himself a name of European celebrity, and it was not likely that the wife of this great philosopher would be deceived as to the true nature of the dawdling in which we indulged. Nor was she. Before we knew what we were about we were plunged into all manner of head work which she, to all appearance, took it for granted we had originally intended carrying on in our reading-room, but of which we had, of course, not for a moment dreamt until she suggested it. Instead, therefore, of spending our intervals from home duties and studio work in a pleasant gossip by our Club fireside, with an occasional skip through the room by way of exercise, here were we bound willy-nilly to read, and, more formidable still, to write essays for our mutual benefit.

Poor dear Lady President! Death alone it was that severed the bonds which united her in all affection with her Club members. Not for long after this first start did she confess to me that through it all there had been no misunderstanding on her part, but that in the midst of much private amusement she had taken the course which she thought best for all of us, and had succeeded in hoodwinking us completely by her manner of doing it.

It would be impossible for me here to enter into anything like a detailed account of our Club's history and achievements from these, its primitive beginnings, up to the present day. That its successful undertakings have been so many and so varied is due, I think, chiefly to the fact that we of the committee have made a point always of welcoming suggestions from general members, and of insisting at the same time that the originator of each scheme shall also be its organiser. Thus we have had innumerable reading societies—Shakespeare, Browning, Keats, and so forth—carried on by genuine admirers of the writers under consideration; permanent German and Italian classes, at which most of the plays of Goethe and Schiller, and much of Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch, have been read and discussed—the more accomplished linguists amongst us being ever

ready to give explanations to, and help on generally, their weaker sisters; a Club story, each chapter of which was written by a different member, and some numbers of a Club magazine in beautiful type-writing, more than one article from which has found a place also in the better known periodicals of the great world.

Yes, since the day on which our Lady President started us with Tennyson's "Becket," causing slips of paper, inscribed each with the name of some character in the play, to be shaken together in a tea cosy and drawn out one by one by us poor victims, to be appropriated and made the subject of a descriptive and critical essay, our Club has seen no end of amusing experiments. One winter, I remember, we had debates, in one of which it was my fortune to defend Fashionable as against Rational Dress. Arguments from published sources I could get none; for, although I sought out innumerable articles about fashion in old magazines, the writers one and all descanted solely upon its follies. However, I pulled through somehow or other with my written paper; tracing, so far as I remember, the French Revolution of '48 to Louis Philippe's personal renunciation of fashionable clothes; hinting mysteriously at the necessity of keeping abreast of the spirit of the age; and pointing back to an Exhibition of the Rational Dress Society (which had been held previously in London) as a collection of the most hideous travesties of human coverings ever witnessed by woman. Of course, as soon as they got at me in debate, my opponents transfixed me with their arrows of high heels and tight lacing. For the name of the good sense of our Club members, however, I must add that though beaten in the theory I was backed by a large majority when we came to votes.

One of the great attractions of our Club, for many seasons back, has been the list of lectures by well-known personages which, autumn by autumn, we have been enabled to announce to our members as part of the programme for the coming winter. We have the great advantage here of living in a University town; and, through friendship for some one or other of our numbers, the College luminaries have again and again, with the utmost kindness, climbed up our humble stairs to hold forth on whatever interesting theme happened at the moment to be specially occupying their attention. Many times have been heard first within these walls of

ours, theories and dissertations destined to be taken up and hotly discussed later on by the London critics; and not seldom has it happened that a known writer's proof-sheets have, in his own unavoidable absence, been brought over and read to us by his wife—quite possibly one of ourselves.

But I must not conclude this summary of our Ladies' Club without adding some words as to its festive and hospitable side. As might be expected of such an institution, our staple form of refreshment is tea; but there are occasions in which we launch forth into much more ambitious entertainments. For one never-to-be-forgotten evening some years ago, we even went so far as to hire a hall to give a dance; but although it was declared a great success, and the artists, on account of the dainty hand-painted programmes and cunning little buttonholes of sweet violets affixed thereto, were lauded to the skies, we have, I must allow, never again summoned sufficient energy to repeat that experience. However, we do still give annual receptions, always two in succession, and at these the duty of entertaining our guests is invariably relegated to the members of our Club Dramatic Society. For, look for a moment at the changes in the Club interior. No partition wall divides now the reading-room from the studio, only a heavy curtain; and when you have drawn that aside, instead of the paraphernalia of the painter, a gently sloping stage platform and a row of footlight reflectors present themselves to your wondering eyes. A straggling easel may here and there be detected, ignominiously shoved into a corner; but to-day the air of the place is, without doubt, distinctly theatrical. And the artists? The Rosa Bonheurs, the Mrs. Butler of the future? *Mutatis mutandis*, their thoughts are now chiefly of Mrs. Siddons and Fanny Kemble!

### THE CORINTH CANAL.

It is some three hundred years since Sir Thomas Browne, of Norwich, wrote these characteristic sentences: "The proverb 'to cut an Isthmus'—*Isthmum perfodere*—to take great pains and effect nothing, is by Erasmus applied unto several (attempts), as that undertaking of Onidians to cut their Isthmus, but especially that of Corinth, so

unsuccessfully attempted by many Emperors. The Onidians were deterred by the peremptory dissuasion of Apollo, plainly commanding them to desist; for if God had thought it fit he would have made that country an Island at first. But this, perhaps, will not be thought a reasonable discouragement unto the activity of those spirits which endeavour to advantage Nature by Art, and upon good grounds to promote any part of the Universe; nor will the ill success of some be made a sufficient deterrent unto others, who know that many learned men affirm that Islands were not from the beginning; that many have been made since by Art; that some Isthmes have been eat by the sea and others cut by the spade; and if policy would permit, that of Panama in America were most worthy the attempt—it being but a few miles over, and would open a shorter cut unto the East Indies and China."

It is sufficiently remarkable that three hundred years after this was written we should just have witnessed the disastrous failure to cut the Isthmus of Panama, and the successful cutting of the Isthmus of Corinth—the one regarded by the good doctor of physic in Norwich as feasible, "if policy would permit," and the other said to have been disapproved by Apollo, after successive failures by "many Emperors." It is odd, too, that Apollo's objection was precisely that urged by a great cleric when a proposal was made to King Philip of Spain to cut a waterway across Panama.

In this connection, too, it is interesting to recall what old Sir Thomas Browne—who combined erudition with sound common-sense on most occasions—wrote about an Egyptian canal: "It is commonly conceived that divers Princes have attempted to cut the Isthmus or tract of land which parteth the Arabian and Mediterranean Sea; but upon inquiry I find some difficulty concerning the place attempted—many with good authority affirming that the intent was not immediately to unite these seas, but to make a navigable channel between the Red Sea and the Nile, the marks whereof are extant to this day. It was first attempted by Sesostris, after by Darius, and in a fear to drown the country, deserted by them both, but was long after re-attempted and in some measure effected by Philadelphus. And so the Grand Signior, who is Lord of the Country, conveyeth his Gallies into the Red Sea by the Nile; for he bringeth



them down to Grand Cairo, where they are taken in pieces, carried upon camels' backs, and rejoined together at Sues, his port and naval station for that sea, whereby in effect he acts the design of Cleopatra, who after the battle of Actium in a different way would have conveyed her Galleys into the Red Sea."

Yet the Suez Canal is a well-established fact. It was made without flooding the country, it is one of the most commercially successful of modern engineering feats, and by it the "Gallies" of all nations pass day after day from sea to sea in never-ceasing processions.

On the Isthmus of Panama, again, there is now nothing but a rapidly filling-up ditch, some rusting machinery and upturned waggons, a few untenanted buildings, and a densely populated graveyard, to show for the last ambitious attempt of France at canalisation.

The Corinth Canal is not to be compared, either from a mechanical or from a commercial point of view, with either of these undertakings, but it is a very interesting achievement, and while its completion signalises another triumph in engineering, its history has also been associated with French financial disasters.

Corinth, of course, as every schoolboy knows, is an ancient Grecian city, the capital of a rich district of Peloponesus, which was captured by the Romans and destroyed in the second century before Christ. In the first century of the Christian era it emerged as a Roman colony, and began to regain some of its former wealth and luxury, but to-day little remains of its former glories save the ruins of a temple. A small and unimportant modern town now bears the name of the mighty ancient city. The neck of land which connects the Morea with the major portion of the modern kingdom of Greece is the Isthmus of Corinth, which until now has separated the waters of the Gulf of Lepanto—or the Gulf of Corinth, as it is also called—from those of the *Ægean* Sea, or more strictly speaking, of the Saronic Gulf.

Eighteen centuries ago, when Corinth was made a Roman colony, the attempt was made to cut this isthmus—an attempt, as Sir Thomas Browne says, repeated by many Emperors. But although an actual cutting was begun in the first century on almost the exact line of the canal which has just been completed, the first design is several hundred years older. Indeed, it would seem that six hundred years before

Christ, Periander entertained the idea, which in subsequent centuries found favour in turn with Julius Cæsar, Caligula, Nero, Adrian, and other Roman Emperors. Periander, surnamed the Tyrant, was one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, and he was wise enough to see the advantage that would be gained to the shipping of Corinth by avoiding the long detour round the peninsula. How far he tried to carry his idea into practice is not now known; but three centuries later Demetrius Poliorcetes took it up—and left it.

Then when Julius Cæsar came to Greece, he saw both the strategical and commercial value of the site of Corinth—as a naval and military station, and as a place of commerce. He set to work to rebuild the city, to restore the port, and to form a colony. He also took up the unfinished work of Demetrius, and had he lived would probably have completed the Canal. The project slumbered after his death, but was revived first by Caligula and then by Nero. Indeed, it has sometimes, though inaccurately, been said that the first really practical attempt by the Romans to cut the Isthmus was under Nero. At any rate, whatever was begun in his reign was soon abandoned.

Thus for eighteen hundred years the project has slept, with occasional dreams of renewing the attempt, and it is not the least interesting incident in the history of the Canal that the shafts sunk by Nero so long ago were found of material advantage in disclosing the nature of the strata to the workers in the nineteenth century. We believe that some of these shafts have been actually utilised during the progress of the work.

The modern enterprise is credited to the Hungarian General Turr, whose name has been associated with many large works, including the first project of the Panama Canal, and in 1881 he obtained from the Greek Government a concession to build the Canal, and Messrs. Gerster and Kander undertook the engineering. They calculated that some ten million cubic metres of earth would have to be removed and deported, and on this basis they estimated the entire cost at thirty million francs, say one million two hundred thousand pounds.

The patriotism of Greece was fired, and the capital asked for was subscribed five times over. But the undertaking was not so simple as a casual glance at the map might lead one to suppose. The Isthmus,

it is true, is less than four miles, say three and three-quarter miles, in width at the line of section, and it is tolerably level on each shore. But it rises to a hump some two or three hundred feet high in the centre, and this hump had to be removed, while also a port and harbour had to be built at each end.

The first sod was cut by the King of Greece in April, 1882, and the work thus begun was expected to be completed within five years. But in the beginning of 1888 the thirty million francs were spent, and the Canal was still a long way from being finished. Thereupon a fresh issue of capital was authorised — other thirty millions in shares of five hundred francs each, bearing six per cent. interest. It seems the fate of all canal enterprises to be attacked by financial embarrassments, for somehow everything always turns out more costly than the promoters anticipate. With the additional capital obtained it was decided to increase the width of the Canal, and to make some further alterations in the plans.

The work for a time went steadily on, with only the occasional interruption of a feast-day or an earthquake. Some fifteen hundred men were pretty constantly employed, and the Government, after an enquiry into the difficulties of construction that had caused the delay, extended the time of the concession till November, 1891.

At the end of 1888 all seemed to promise well, and such progress was being made that completion within the stipulated period, and for the increased capital cost of sixty million francs, was confidently anticipated. But in the spring of 1889 came financial disaster. The work of constructing the Canal had been allotted by the concessionaires, the Corinth Canal Company, to a French "Société pour la Construction." The Canal Company was also French, and became involved in the general financial wreckage which attended the crisis in Paris, when the Comptoir d'Escompte and other financial institutions went over like nine-pins. The Canal Company could not meet its obligations, and the "Société pour la Construction" seized upon the property in satisfaction of a claim for one million francs. Thereupon work was suspended, and the next act of the drama was in a Court of Law.

The law moves slowly, and it was not until the spring of 1890 that the Civil Tribunal of Paris finally ordered the dissolution, under a liquidator, of the unfor-

tunate Canal Company. But in the meantime diplomacy had been at work, and M. Tricoups, the Greek Premier, succeeded in carrying through an agreement between the Greek Government, a French banker, and an engineer, for redeeming the Canal from the bankrupt Company. Thereafter a Greek Company was formed, and a Bill was passed through the Greek Chambers transferring the concessions and privileges to the new Company, with a share capital of five million francs and borrowing powers for fifteen million francs. This fresh capital was needed for the completion of the works—an extension of three years being also granted by the Chambers—and not to recompense the original unfortunate adventurers, whose rights were declared forfeited by their failure to fulfil the terms of the concession.

The new Greek Company let out the work to French and Italian contractors. At that time some three and a half million cubic metres remained to be excavated, and engineers expressed doubts of the practicability of doing it within the stipulated time. But a Greek Company had a better chance of consideration in this matter than a foreign Company, and at their annual meeting in September last year, held in Athens, the shareholders were assured that if the Canal was not open by the appointed time, the twenty-second of March, 1893, it would certainly be open before their next annual meeting. And, unlike the promises of the directors of the Panama Canal Company, this promise has been fulfilled.

The Corinth Canal, the dream of centuries, became an accomplished fact on the sixth of August last, on which day it was formally opened by the King and Queen of Greece, with great ceremony and much rejoicing. With a pair of golden scissors the Queen cut a silken cord stretched across the entrance, and then the Royal yacht, followed by a flotilla of torpedo-boats commanded by Prince George, passed into the waterway. The procession was brought up by English, Greek, and Russian men-of-war, and a perfect fleet of yachts of all nations, and steamers with excursion parties. How the shades of the old Greek warriors and Roman colonists must have gasped with amazement!

Such is the history of this interesting enterprise, for the completion of which the credit largely belongs to M. Matsas, the Greek engineer for the Greek Company. It has taken rather more than eleven years

to make, including the stoppage from financial causes. The following are its dimensions. Length of cutting, three and one-third miles; width at bottom, seventy-two feet; depth, twenty-seven feet; width at surface, eighty-two feet.

To get through the central high land cutting had to be made through rock to a depth of two hundred and eighty feet, with immense labour and cost. The waterway itself is almost straight, running in a north-westerly direction, but it is not wide enough for vessels of any size to pass each other, and no sidings seem to have been provided as in the Suez Canal. There are no locks, and the sea flows through at the rate of two or three miles an hour.

At the Corinth entrance are two moles, affording protection and a passage about one hundred and fifty yards wide, and here has been founded the new town of Poseidonia.

At the other end the entrance is protected by a single curved breakwater, and here has been founded the new town of Isthmia.

For about three-fourths of its length the banks of the Canal are faced with solid masonry, with a road along each bank. Throughout its length are placed electric lamps on both sides, at intervals of three hundred yards.

One of the first persons to use the Canal as a through-passage was the Empress Frederick of Germany, who, in returning from a visit to Athens, came through the new waterway to Trieste.

What, then, of the future of this undertaking? It will not revolutionise the trade of the world as the Suez Canal did, and as the Panama Canal was expected to do, but it will doubtless give a tremendous impetus to the trade of the Levant. Next to Greece, perhaps, the country that will derive most benefit will be Austria, but all Europe should derive some advantage from this new pathway of commerce. It will shorten by some two hundred and fifty miles the voyage from Malta, Sicily, and the Adriatic to Constantinople and the Black Sea, and it will enable coasting-vessels to avoid the stormy winter passage round Cape Matapan.

It is estimated that an annual traffic of four and a half million tons of goods of all kinds may be expected, and the rates are discriminating. Thus, cargoes to and from the Adriatic will pay from fifty centimes to one franc per ton, according as they be passenger steamers, cargo

steamers, or sailing ships; while vessels to and from other parts will pay from forty to fifty centimes per ton. There is also a charge of one franc for every passenger carried through the Canal. Between the Adriatic ports and the Piræus the Canal route will shorten the passage by about one hundred and fifty miles.

When the Royal fleet came up from the Piræus to open the Canal, did any one recall that in the dim and distant past it was Corinth that sent ships to Athens? In their struggles with Egina the Athenians found themselves ill-prepared with ships, and they applied to the Corinthians for assistance. The Corinthians sent twenty triremes, but having laws against lending, they made formal sale of the vessels to the Athenians for a trifle of five drachmæ each.

At a later date the Athenians accused the Corinthians of cowardice in running away before the battle of Salamis, escaping in a strange little bark assumed to have been sent by the gods. The Corinthians gave a different version of the story, and claimed to be the saviours, not the betrayers, of Greece.

However this may be, the old Corinthians were great in commerce and navigation. The situation of their city on the Isthmus made it the entrepôt of trade between Peloponnesus and Livadia. They seem to have been not only capital sailors but also skilful shipbuilders, for Thucydides says it was they who invented the trireme. They were the founders of Syracuse, of Corfu, and of numerous ports along the coast of Greece, and it was by their maritime pursuits that they extended their commerce so as to become famous for their wealth. It may be that their ships were of small account, for Plutarch says that only five persons were allowed to go in each coasting-vessel; but some of the best maritime work in the world has been done with diminutive vessels.

It is odd now to compare the modern war-ships and ocean-steamers, such as the inhabitants of the new town of Isthmia will see passing their doors, with the small galleys of Corinth in her days of glory. On this little Isthmus the old world and the new meet, and an idea which has taken two thousand years to germinate has finally been carried out by Grecian hands, although with barbarian money. By the side of the ancient wall of defence is now running the iron horse of the Peloponnesus Railway, and for several years past the iron

road has joined the Piræus with Athens. Is it possible that the Hellenic kingdom is again to become great among the nations?

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER VIII.

MR. LOVELL'S fears that he had spoilt Zenobia's night were amply justified by the result. He had spoilt it most effectually; and she spent the long hours of darkness in unprofitable retrospection, going over and over again in memory each word that had been spoken during that painful meeting, and each look that had accompanied it; and only quitting this branch of the all-absorbing subject in order to plunge into yet more useless speculations as to the future. These midnight musings brought no fresh light to bear upon her father's dark accusations, nor did they make that father appear one whit more trustworthy, or better entitled to respect or honour; how could they, when their sole result was to convince her more unquestionably of Mr. Devondale's honour and truth? Her father, she told herself a thousand times, must be either deceiving himself, or wilfully deceiving her: there could be no other explanation of his conduct. But how this should be, she knew not. If he were deceiving himself, his story was most strangely borne out by circumstantial evidence: voice, appearance, name, all appeared to decide, beyond the possibility of dispute, the question of the young tutor's identity with the objectionable opera-singer of the States. And yet, she could not think it: though what object her father could have in wilfully prejudicing her against Mr. Devondale, if he really were all that she believed him to be, she was equally at a loss to guess. His manner to her had not been unkind, and he had not appeared in any way to resent her very evident lack of affection for himself, or of confidence in his word. Rather he had taken both states of mind for granted, regarding them—as, indeed, they were—as the natural result of his own conduct. A reasonable man, certainly, so far as his daughter was concerned; but was he reasonable on other points? Was it—could it be—possible that he had resented some imaginary injury on young Devondale's part,

and did not scruple to avenge himself by blackening his character? Perhaps, even, long brooding on a fancied wrong had resulted, as it sometimes will, in monomania, and he really was not accountable for the dreadful things he said?

Thus one theory pursued another through the girl's weary and bewildered brain, and she found neither peace nor satisfaction in any of them.

One decision, and one alone, had she arrived at, when the tardy dawn at length crept into the room; but that one was of some weight.

She had decided that should a suitable opportunity occur in the course of the day, she would mention her father's name to Mr. Devondale—not that she credited that father's assertions for a moment—no, indeed!—but merely to satisfy her own mind as to whether or no there had been anything in the past to justify Herbert Lovell's claim to a previous knowledge of him. That once ascertained, she might perhaps guess a little more of her father's probable state of mind, and whether it were possible that the whole charge was merely a monstrous delusion on his part. In any case, she would be able to feel that she was thus taking a step herself—though but a very small one—towards clearing up the mystery.

That morning passed very slowly; creeping by, Zenobia thought, as though each moment were weighted with lead. Her aunt talked even more garrulously than usual, and, as it chanced, Mr. Devondale was frequently the subject of her conversation. "I was talking to Mr. Priestley last night—he took me in to dinner—and he was speaking very highly of Mr. Devondale, who, he says, is a young man of very superior attainments. He thinks Mr. Paxton is exceedingly fortunate to have secured him for Cecil, and it is evident he is quite easy in his own mind that he is one of the Devondales of Dartmouth. He has never spoken of his family to you, Zenobia, I suppose?"

"No, never; save in the very vaguest way."

"Ah, well; it is easy to see he is of good family: and—like all who are naturally well-born—he is so accustomed to the idea that he never thinks of mentioning it. It is only vulgar upstarts, like Mrs. Turnour-Smith, who think it necessary to be always expatiating on their claims to genteel extraction; the true lady or gentleman is content to leave you to

take it for granted. Therefore, never speak much of your birth, Zenobia; for to do so would look as though it were open to question."

"And is it not?" the girl asked, with some bitterness.

"My dear! And you a Brabourne! Your uncle would not like to hear you question it; nor do I either, for that matter. I wonder what form the Devondale eccentricity takes. I suppose Mr. Devondale has never alluded to the subject to you, Zenobia?"

"Never; he was little likely to do so."

"Why, I don't know; there are eccentricities and eccentricities, and the eccentricity of the Devondales of Dartmouth need not necessarily be discreditable to them. Certainly, I remember hearing of one ducal house, the members of which always insisted on wearing out their old clothes; but then, as no one could imagine they did it from lack of means to replace them, this little eccentricity did them no great harm. After all, it is all a question of position. Those whose social standing is well assured lose nothing by a reputation for eccentricity, even if they do not gain some little distinction by it; but for those who are still climbing up the social ladder it is a terrible hindrance, if it be nothing worse. However, I should gather from Mr. Priestley's manner that the Devondales of Dartmouth can afford to be a little eccentric without any fear of losing caste."

Thus the old lady talked on, and Zenobia listened to her mechanically, scarcely hearing a word, but wishing—oh, how earnestly!—that the works of her eloquence would run down, and the incessant sound cease.

At length lunch was over, and the hour had arrived for her to go to the Paxtons.

"The doctor is with Mr. Cecil, miss; so Mrs. Paxton says would you kindly wait for a few minutes in the little drawing-room?"

Zenobia followed the servant to the room indicated, scarcely knowing whether she felt more relieved or troubled at the delay. She was anxious to meet Mr. Devondale again, to see for herself how utterly his pleasant, frank face and open, manly bearing refuted her father's charges; but she distrusted her own calmness and self-control after the wearing anxieties of that long and sleepless night, and she feared that such kindly friends as he and Cecil could not fail to remark her wan and weary looks.

The little drawing-room was a bright and cosy room, and far pleasanter in these dull December days than the more stately apartment with which it communicated by means of folding-doors, now heavily curtained off. The fire burnt cheerily, and threw a genial glow over the warm crimson hangings and luxurious velvet chairs; for Mrs. Paxton delighted in warmth and colour, and, unlike the generality of dwellers in dreary Queen Street, could never have enough of either. Zenobia sat down and tried to think of nothing in particular, but without much success; she rose and moved restlessly about the room, seeking to find some distraction in outward objects from inward trepidation, but all to no purpose. The view from the window was not inspiring, and she gazed on the little town garden for quite five minutes without deriving any benefit from the contemplation of its square grass-plot, with four carefully cut-back trees planted with mathematical precision at the four corners. Zenobia walked back to the fire again, and sat down. The doctor's visits often lasted a long time, and it would never do for her to give way to nervousness like this, or she would be sure to make a fool of herself somehow when the anxiously desired yet dreaded moment of release came. She took up a book from a table near her, and tried to read.

A loud knock at the hall-door startled her, and she laid the book down again and listened—listened intently, and with an absorbed interest, though without the faintest idea of what she expected to hear that could be of the smallest moment to her.

The door was opened, and a subdued sound of voices followed; then some one was shown into the drawing-room beyond the heavy curtains, and the servant said civilly:

"I'll tell Mr. Devondale, sir. He'll be disengaged in a few minutes now."

She went out and closed the door; and a great horror seized on Zenobia, for might it not be her father who had come, despite his promise to her, to insult Mr. Devondale with his horrible accusations? If this were so, she reflected with a shudder, he must at least be himself convinced of their truth. It was with a sinking heart, therefore, that she waited behind the folding-doors, which, by some accident, were not so fast closed as usual, to hear what would follow Mr. Devondale's entrance.

She had not to wait long.

A well-known step on the stair, and Mr. Devondale's voice speaking to the servant—"In the drawing-room, you say? Very well!"—warned her of his approach. She heard him enter the adjoining room, and close the door behind him, and then—the name he uttered was strange to her; the voice that replied to him was a stranger's voice.

Zenobia clasped her hands in a sudden passion of joy and relief; how great her fears had been she scarcely realised till that moment. Yet even then she hardly knew what it was she feared; not the confirmation of her father's words; that worst discovery never occurred to her as possible.

The two men were talking together in subdued tones, so that it would have required an effort on the part of any one in the adjoining room to follow their conversation intelligently. Zenobia, it is needless to say, did not make that effort; she had no wish to listen to a conversation that did not in any way concern her, and she poked the fire vigorously as a gentle hint to the speakers that they might chance to be overheard.

That hint was disregarded. The voices rose presently in the heat of argument till words and phrases began to force themselves upon the girl's attention; she strove not to hear them, not to attach any meaning to them, but all in vain. They caught her attention despite all her efforts, and held it fast.

"Upon my word, Devondale, you'd better reconsider it. A man must be a fool to throw over such a chance as this. A capital company for the provinces, and the certainty of a London engagement to follow. Even with your voice and style it will be long before you have such another offer. It's a very different thing from that scratch company you went starrng with before! I tell you, if you take it, you're a made man!"

"It's no use," Mr. Devondale said quietly; "I've no doubt all you say is right enough, but I've given up all idea of the profession. Why don't you take the opening yourself, Jack?"

"Can't! The parts wouldn't suit me: they're too high for my voice. What's the hitch, Devondale? Family reasons, or is there a lady in the case? Believe me, neither is worth chucking the profession for when a man has a voice like yours."

"We'll say—family reasons, Jack! My people object."

"Well, let them! Nobody's the worse for that. You don't mean to say you'd sacrifice your career—and after such a start as you made, too—for your people's sake? Oh, but you know this is carrying a joke too far altogether! Devondale, you're mad!"

"I hope not!" with the bright, boyish laugh Zenobia knew so well. With what a shock it fell upon her ear now! "You see there are reasons—family reasons, as you say—why my people should feel strongly about it. They've had trouble enough already in connection with operatic engagements, and I don't think it would be fair to disregard their objections."

"And are you going to turn parson to oblige them? The intoning will ruin your voice."

"No, I'm not going into the Church."

"You'll be tired of your bear-leading business in another month. How can you exist in this dull little provincial town; you, who are accustomed to the gay and rollicking life of Bohemia? You'll be cutting your own throat, or your bear's, if you go on with this sort of thing."

"On the contrary, I've never had a better time in my life."

"My dear fellow, who is the lady?"

"Jack, we've been good friends always; and I don't mind telling you this much, that whereas I was resolved to give up the profession when I came here, I'm doubly determined on it now!"

"And I repeat—who is the lady?"

"Never mind at present. But please understand that my decision is final."

"Then there's no more to be said, and I've come here on a wild goose chase. Wild goose? I wrong the noble bird by the comparison; the tamest of barn-door fowls rather. Ta-ta, Devondale! I won't detain you from your gentle bear any longer. You a tutor! How some of the fellows will laugh when they hear it! A pretty teacher of youth, upon my honour!"

Frank Devondale joined lightly in the other's boisterous laughter, and the two young men left the room together.

Then Zenobia rose, pale as death, and paced up and down the room restlessly, clasping and unclasping her hands in a perfect agony of doubt and fear.

"That scratch company you went starrng with before." "They've had trouble enough already in connection with operatic engagements." "The gay and rollicking life of Bohemia." "You a tutor! A pretty teacher of youth, upon my honour!"

These, and other phrases, still rang in her ears, filling her with horror and dismay by the strong confirmation they seemed to give to her father's words. What did it all mean? she asked herself over and over again. What could be the possible explanation of it? No doubt there might be some truth in Herbert Lovell's hints as to Mr. Devondale's past life, and yet the young tutor be absolutely guiltless of the sins laid to his charge; but Zenobia had so fully persuaded herself that the whole story was a fraud or a delusion, that to find it confirmed in even one particular gave her a terrible shock; which, taken in conjunction with the wearing anxiety and trouble of her long hours of sleeplessness, deprived her for the time of all power of calm and dispassionate reasoning.

"You a tutor! A pretty teacher of youth, upon my honour!"

They were the very words her father had used, and that had so haunted her ever since. Zenobia forgot to ask herself whether the very same words might not be used with a difference; and whether Mr. Devondale's friend meant them to be taken seriously. She forgot everything, in short, but the fact that her father had used them, and her own overwhelming fear lest any part of his accusation should prove true.

There were a few parting words at the hall-door; then it was closed with a bang, and Mr. Devondale crossed the hall hastily to the little drawing-room.

"Miss Brabourne," he exclaimed; "have they forgotten—what is the matter? Are you ill?" he added abruptly, struck

by her ghastly pallor, and the strange gaze with which she was regarding him.

"No, no; but—I have been here all the time. I couldn't help hearing——"

"Nothing to make you so pale, surely! You are above the Slowton prejudices, are you not, and won't quite cut me because I was once an opera-singer? Besides, it is all over and done with now. I'm going to be quite respectable in future." But though he spoke lightly, there was a scarcely veiled anxiety in his frank blue eyes—for how could he tell how far those terrible Slowton prejudices might have affected her?

"No, no; it is not that!" she faltered, grasping the back of a chair beside her with trembling fingers; for she felt faint and dizzy, and the room seemed to rock around her. "I want to ask you a question."

"As many as you please. What is it?"

"Tell me what you know of Herbert Lovell?"

"Herbert Lovell?" he repeated blankly.

"Yes. You know him?" How far away and unreal her voice sounded, and what a strange, fixed look had come into her great grey eyes!

"Know him? I?"

"Yes," she reiterated. "Tell me."

"I—I seem to have heard the name," he said thoughtfully: then, as with a sudden flash of recollection, "Yes; I know something of Herbert Lovell, but assuredly I shall not tell you what I know of him."

Zenobia uttered a stifled cry, and fell prostrate at his feet.

The strain had been too much for her and she had fainted.

## NOTICE.

*On Wednesday, the 15th of November, will be published,*  
**THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER**  
 OF  
**ALL THE YEAR ROUND,**  
 BY  
**MARY ANGELA DICKENS and MARGARET MOULE,**  
 Joint Authors of "TAKEN ON TRUST."

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.  
(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "*Aunt Hopsy's Foundling*," "*My Land of Beulah*,"  
"*Bonnie Kate*," "*The Peyton Romance*," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XI. "BID ME GOOD BYE, LOVE!"

"THERE was a lovely tar-barrel," said Missy, in an ecstasy; "it made such a beautiful shining—like heaven——"

The violet eyes were raised, full of rapt delight; the hands clasped against Missy's gown. "Oh, Missy, you didn't see it—how can you tell?" cried everybody.

There was a lurking twinkle in the blue, a little conscious happy smile on Missy's lips.

"I didn't see it; but 'Liza did—she was out for a walk with Mr. Drummer, she was—I heard her say so: and he didn't like the tar-barrel, and called it navy names. There will be one every night now; Mr. Drummer said so. I heard him. He said, 'drat 'em.' Allison, dear—what is 'drat 'em'? Is it a bad word? Would it do to scold Minnymin when she's tiresome, do you think?"

"Certainly not," said Alison, with decision.

"Oh, indeed, then there's an end of that," said the mite; "let us talk of something else. Do you know that one of my Sergeant officers going to another place?"

"Missy, what do you mean? I really must ask mother to stop your gossiping with Eliza in the way you do——"

It was beneath Missy's dignity to hear this last remark, so she calmly ignored it.

"It's the nice officer Sergeant that's going," continued the child, "the one that

sings so nice you know, and used to be so very pleased when Mr. Drummer told him about me—yes, he was—'Liza said so."

"Where is he going?" said Elsie—then she added impatiently—"what are you talking about, Missy?"

"Things I know 'bout," replied that young lady, with an unspeakable air, and one white shoulder up to her ear; "I tell you he's going to a bee—u—ti—ful country where there are monkeys in every tree. They sit still and don't mind, and you pull their tails—at least, I think you do. I couldn't sleep at night for thinking of all the lovely things he'd see. Shall you be sorry when he's gone, Alison?"

"Very sorry."

"So shall I—it's a great pity. Mr. Drummer says he's as fine a Sergeant as stands in shoe-leather. He's really very funny, is that drummer—he 'muses me a great deal, I often smile to hear him."

"You seem to hear him a good deal," said Elsie.

"Why, you see, he's 'Liza's sweetheart—didn't you know that? 'Liza says it's spoken of in the regiment, so it's 'stronary you didn't know 'bout it. I shall have a sweetheart when I'm grown up big—I think I shall have little Verrinder."

"Missy!" cried both the girls in concert.

"Is it rudeto call him 'little Verrinder'?"

"Very."

"Well, I heard Cap'en Lindsay say it, and some people say Chubby."

"You know that Dad would be angry if he heard that," said Elsie.

"Yes," said Missy with great composure; "he'd say I was pretty bad; any way I do like Mis—ter Verrinder; he's so dear and fond, and I shall have him for



a sweetheart—at least I think I shall—one of these days."

No one having any comment to make upon this announcement, little Missy went off singing to her own happy little self, and the two girls were left looking into each other's face rather gravely. "It seems like a stampede," said Elsie at last; "in which Hugh—Captain Dennison has set the example. Tell me, Alison, is it quite, quite settled that he must go—"

"Quite."

The word had a smothered sound as if it came through tears, but held no hint of indecision.

"Does he know that there is no hope for him?"

"Yes."

"If I were a man I would never give up hope—as long as there wasn't any one else in the way."

"Wouldn't you?"

"No—no—no!" This with passionate insistence; then, peering into Alison's face, that was half averted; "and as there can be no one else in your case, I think, Hugh is cowardly to run away."

"He is not cowardly—he is brave and good; and oh, Elsie, I wish things were different from what they are!"

"You are a riddle to me, Alison."

"I am a riddle to myself."

After a silence, they drifted on to other topics, but the shadow did not lift from Alison's fair face. It seemed to her, indeed, that her way lay among the shadows all the time, that her feet were set in stony places and oftentimes stumbled. Something was gathering about her, enfolding her in intangible, yet irresistible bonds; fettering her will and enslaving her thoughts; something that she girded against, yet could not shake off. The spirit of restlessness too possessed her, and the unruffled calm of Mrs. Henneker's content was stirred by a floating idea that dear Alison was not well.

At this, Elsie hastened to avert suspicion from what she fancied was the real cause—namely, the trouble about Hugh Dennison.

"I think, mother," she said with an engaging candour, "that Alison takes too much out of herself. She is so terribly in earnest about everything."

"Ah, my dear," said her mother, with a sigh, "it is in the blood. Poor Mary took things so terribly in earnest that she died of her sorrows. I remember when first she wanted to marry that dreadful

man, Ellis Drew. I never saw anything like it before or since. Nothing would turn her from her resolve to become his wife; and we know what it came to in the end."

"Still," said Elsie, "it was a beautiful thing."

"Yes, but such natures are very difficult to deal with. They suffer more than others do, and, in a way, make their own pain. I wish Alison would marry, and marry where there were no difficulties to overcome. Elsie dear, a nature like hers is a great charge for a man—and yet I think I know one, noble and true, who would look upon such a responsibility as the best gift of Heaven. Nay, I did not mean to make you cry, child—I know you could not bear to part with Alison—indeed, we none of us could; and perhaps it may be my fancy altogether. Time will show." But a tear stole down Mrs. Henneker's cheek, and had to be wiped away.

Little Missy was quite right. Every night came the "beautiful shining"; every night the trees showed dark against the glow, and the wild rebel songs rang up to the star-gemmed sky.

The men were confined to barracks after sunset until further orders, since, of all things, the authorities dreaded a disturbance between the civil and military elements; and Drummer Coghlan kept unsleeping vigil over Private Deacon, suspecting—wrongfully, as we know—his loyalty and truth. The Colonel of the One Hundred and Ninety-Third would have scouted the idea of any of his men being disaffected; were not the men of the regiment a proverb for pluck, courage, and smartness?

Those zealous young warriors, Ensign Green and Lieutenants Verrinder and Blizzard, held a sort of informal council of war to discuss the probable result if any single soul that stood the Regiment should be even suspected of treason. "The Chief would have a fit, 'pon my soul he would," said Mr. Green, pulling viciously at the sparse hairs on either corner of his upper lip.

"I could fully enter into his feelings if he did; the blot would be ineffaceable," added Chubby. "The stain— isn't it Shakespeare who talks about all the waters of the ocean not being able to wash—ar—the—"

"Dear me!" said the doctor, entering

unannounced, "are you rehearsing for the next Soldiers' Evening already? Upon my word, Verrinder, you're the best fellow on the face o' the airth."

"My dear Musters," said Chubby, with an awe-inspiring dignity, "may I beg of you to close the door? Or stay, let me do it. It is well to avoid apparent haste—and—you never know. There was a fellow selling something here to-day—I can tell you I didn't like the look of him—not half—I mentioned it to the Chief in the ante-room, but he rather pooh-poohed the notion—I must say I felt a little hurt."

"If the Chief was a bit short with you this morning, Chubby, don't you take it to heart," said Blizzard, removing a pipe from his mouth to make the observation; "a rumour reached him, I know, that rubbed his fur up the wrong way. You know there is something on about Colour-Sergeant Smith leaving the regiment; I have been told he is to apply for a transfer to India. We all know how the Chief hates to lose a good non-com., and by Jove, it's a long while since we'd had such a splendid specimen of the kind as Smith, eh? Even the name doesn't seem to fit him—not good enough. It will take us all our time to fill his place if he goes. I, for my part, looked upon him as a fixture, and as a man bound to get his commission sooner or later. By Jove, he'd fit it like a glove, eh? They don't always, you know." This with a sufficiently droll grimace, called up by remembrances of a certain Quartermaster who had shown a disposition to slap the men, to whose level he was just raised, on the back, and address others who had once known him as a highly respectable Corporal by their surnames "tout court."

"Oh, there would be nothing of that sort with Colour-Sergeant Smith," said the doctor confidently. "He'd glide into the position as if he were born to it—as I've often a mind to think he was, by the way. Many a man who gets into a tight place tries to pull himself straight again—through the Ranks."

"And there's many a worse way, mind you that," put in Chubby, with the air of a tried General of many campaigns; "more especially in a regiment like this, where the Chief thinks more of an A1 Sergeant than he does of two of us."

"The Chief's right, too," continued the doctor. "Your non-coms. are like the prefects in a school; they have a closer knowledge of the body from which they

themselves have sprung than any of us can ever get at."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Blizzard, "if there's a worse bit of news in store for the Chief yet. We all know what he thinks of Dennison, and I did hear a hint——"

"You don't mean to say Dennison's going to give us the go-by, too?" said the doctor; "why, the old corps would hardly be like itself without Dennison. God bless me! how well I remember him first joining—a boy fresh from school, with a bright, fearless face, and such genial ways about him, delighted with everything, and saying how lucky he was that his father, General Dennison, had purchased him into such a jolly regiment! I was only an Assistant Surgeon then myself, and we chummed up a good deal, I can tell you, though I was much the older of the two, of course. He was such a bright boy; and really I think I may say that from that day to this I never heard man or woman give an ill word to Hugh Dennison."

No one had noticed that Verrinder had risen to his feet and grown pale under all his sunburn, but every man noticed a strangeness in his voice when he spoke.

"Dennison," he said, "Dennison going, Blizzard! Who told you that?"

But at this critical junction Blizzard's memory failed him. It was a way it had.

Ensign Green put on a face of extreme subtlety, and spoke in as mysterious a voice as though he were discussing the details of a Fenian rising.

"The all-important question is this—who is she?"

Dead silence followed; and Verrinder walked to the window, staring fixedly out at the prospect afforded by the barrack square.

"We have not far to look for an answer to that question," said Blizzard, and Mr. Green blushed up to the tips of his somewhat prominent ears.

Two of the men present realised that silent reference was made to Alison Drew. Only Verrinder and Blizzard failed to catch the truth.

A chivalrous dislike to mentioning a lady's name had caused a turn in the conversation, and by the time Verrinder looked round again the doctor was just leaving the room, and Ensign Green was hitching up his sword—being on duty that day, he was in the usual war-paint—and jerking his shako, which had been pushed

unbecomingly far back on his head, into its proper position. Then he settled the deep crimson sash more neatly across the breast of his tunic and prepared to depart, but lingered, waiting the chance of Verrinder turning his back once more. Then Mr. Green made a secret and significant sign to Blizzard, as who should say, "the even tenour of our friend's way is disturbed—mark you that," and set off slowly down the long, shallow flight of stone stairs that led to the square.

He sang as he went. It was all very well for Miss Drew to snub him at choir practice, but there were times and seasons when a man could have his own way if he chose. And it was Colour Sergeant Smith's song that he sang, with its refrain of "Bid me good-bye, good-bye, love."

"He doesn't sing it a patch on the Sergeant, but it's a good old sort of tune, eh, Blizzard?" said Verrinder, as the song died away round the corner of the stone passage, and one little echoing "Good-bye" was all that was left of it. "And somebody's got to say good-bye; but perhaps it's not this child this time. Gad! Blizzard, I feel as if I could sit down and cry like a woman."

"Don't do that, old fellow," said Blizzard, alarmed, but Chubby reassured him.

"Not I! Still, you know, I feel like it. I'd screwed myself up to it, you know—losing her I mean, you know—and going out to the first brush anywhere abroad, and getting to the front, and all that sort of thing, I had indeed: and now to feel there's a chance for me, and to have the guilt taken off the gingerbread by knowing that Dennison—Heaven bless my soul, Blizzard! life's a stupendous thing—it is indeed," a truth that other people besides Charles Verrinder, Lieutenant, were realising just then.

Truly did life seem, not only a stupendous thing, but a very bitter thing to the Colour-Sergeant of number one company in these days. He was not unconscious of the favour that all regarded him with in the regiment in which he had taken the Queen's shilling; he was conscious of the friendly interest of his Colonel, of the more than goodwill of the Captain of his company, of the respect and affection of the men under his authority; he often said to himself that no one need want a better regiment to serve in than the One Hundred and Ninety-Third, and yet, in spite of all, he must go. And the reason was this—he had gone mad.

To those about him no doubt he appeared sane enough and just like other men, but in his own heart he knew the bitter truth. He knew that a power stronger than himself had swept him off his mental feet; that he was drifting with the stream; that in nothing short of flight could he find safety. A desperate disease calls for desperate remedies—that was his case. For things were going badly with him—very badly indeed. A real passion never stands still; it grows and grows. He had begun to feel as if his life had been a quest for a Holy Grail that was now for the first time in sight. His past had been a stormy one—not a black one, as men of the world count blackness; but, nevertheless, one that had caused bitter pain to those who loved him; a past that he had set himself to live down. Now he said to himself that if he had known Alison Drew sooner, that wild past would never have been. Even in thinking of her like this the red blood would rush to his brow, for the horrible incongruity of their relative positions hit him like a flail. How dare he—how dare he whisper her name, even to his own heart? What would she say—what would she feel, if she knew? Brave soldier, brave man as he was, he trembled as he passed her, if he met her by chance. He dared not even salute her unless the Major was with her, and such salute became a duty.

Then the gulf between them yawned black and deep, and he dared not try to look across it; the gaping void drew and held his eyes. He thought he knew the feelings of some guilty creature who, carrying the knowledge of a crime within his heart, yet moved among his innocent fellow-creatures as one of them. He had a shrinking fear of self-betrayal; for a regiment is at all times a glass house. The same people are about you, the same things are done, day after day, almost hour after hour. It is not like anything else on earth; and so defined and clear are the barriers between class and class, that no one is on the defensive. All work together at anything that is for the common good, and no one asserts himself, because every one's status is too definite to need bolstering up. It appeared to Colour-Sergeant Smith that there were only two events in life—choir practice, and the fortnightly Soldiers' Evenings. Every other aspect of life and duty was in abeyance to these; and yet he knew that to him they were fatal times indeed. His everyday surroundings took new shape and form; things that had

been as matters of course, now hurt him. The coarseness of many of those who surrounded him, and with whom he was necessarily brought into close contact, grated upon him cruelly. The unsavoury word, broad jest, or noisy oath seemed an offence against her perfect purity and exquisite refinement.

It was a wretched life enough the man led, conscious of his own madness and folly, yet helpless to break his fetters; nay, fully realising that those fetters were closing upon him day by day. He counted the days, he counted the hours, until the one that should bring him into her presence. That hour seemed the culmination of his life. Yet it was agony to see the men of her own rank paying her open deference—noble service of gentle courtesy—while he had to stand by dumb.

One precious privilege he had that no one could take from him.

He could listen.

When the birds sing in the sunshine, the humblest of God's creatures may hearken at will, and take the joy and the ripple of the music into their own hearts to gladden them; and when Alison spoke or sang, no one could hinder him from drinking in the sweetness of tone or tune. He knew that every time his eyes rested on her sweet face, the madness within him grew; that every time she spoke a casual word to him, her power over him increased a hundred-fold. He knew that if by chance his hand touched hers, as he moved the music at her bidding, his pulses were stirred to a tumult of joy. He knew these privileges of his, which he shared with every creature about her, to be poor things indeed, but yet—as he would say to himself with a passionate insistence—his own. His kindness to Drummer Coghlan fairly puzzled that astute man, who straightway gave a glowing description of the Sergeant to 'Liza and little Missy was not behindhand in chattering to Alison and Elsie of his manifold perfections, ending up by solemnly announcing that she hadn't made up her mind if she shouldn't throw over "Mis—ter Verrinder" and take the "bee—oo—fitel" Sergeant for a sweetheart. When it was explained to her that ladies didn't take Sergeants for sweethearts, she evidently looked upon the distinction as a narrow and invidious one, declaring her intention of being "triumphant" and pleasing her own self when she was "big as 'Liza'."

The fact was, that the Sergeant, made

cunning by that astute schoolmaster, Love, managed to hear something of Miss Drew's movements through the open-hearted drummer, and even stooped so pitifully low as to affect an unbounded interest in Shadrach, Meshach, and little Abednego, and to have those worthies brought to his bunk for exhibition. So it came about that he heard about little Patsey, and his eyes grew quite misty as he thought of his Lady going on her mission of love and comfort to the suffering child. Her kindness to Norah, her interest in Harry Deacon, these things he knew, and held sacred. Had he not proved it? Had he not been "falsely true"—of "faith unfaithful"—because of them? He had thought seriously, several times since that night, of Harry Deacon; indeed, he and the drummer had held a sort of council together on the matter. To have stayed out without pass after post, because of Norah ("I'm that way myself with 'Liza, when she gets off for an hour, an' we're after taking a turn by the river in the twilight," Coghlan had put in at this stage of the said council) that was a mere nothing; to get a trifle too much on the spree, bad, truly, but still what many a good soldier falls into now and again. A pity, since no good-conduct badge can be won that way, and the record sheet cannot be as clean as might be wished, but after all, not an unpardonable sin, looked at from a soldier's point of view.

But the possibility—

Coghlan winced as if some one had stuck a pin into him, even in only suggesting it, and the Colour-Sergeant looked grave.

"I don't think the Colonel could stomach such a notion, anyway," said Coghlan. "He'd be after losing his senses at the mere mention of it; for though they do call him the soldier's friend, he can be stiff enough when needs be—as the lot of us knows well—an' I'm after thinkin', Sergeant, as the Adjutant suspects Harry, an' sets a little he-divel by the name o' Tim, a fittin' shadder of an unbaptised spalpeen as lives up the valley way, to spy on him besoides. Not a worred o' this to ony livin' soul, Sergeant, beyond you an' me. I'm terrified to say the ghost of a worred, even to 'Liza, for if mischief came to Harry Deacon, Norah would break her blessed heart, an' Miss Alison—the saints make her bed in her sickness when her own time comes!—she's that pitiful and tender-hearted, she'd cry her sweet eyes out to keep her company."

To all this the Sergeant agreed most cordially; and they resolved to keep a sharp eye on Private Deacon. But everything, before a week had passed away, was forgotten in the stir and turmoil that gathered round, darkening the air.

These tar-barrels, that Missy loved so well, were, it appeared, but a sort of overture or introduction to worse things to come.

The anniversary of the death of certain men whom the popular voice had canonised as martyrs to a holy cause was at hand. Rumour ran wild, telling of the mighty things that were to come to pass that night of nights. Curiosity and interest were raised to the highest pitch among the men of the One Hundred and Ninety-Third, and their officers and non-coms. were all on the alert.

The Chief was stern and inscrutable, saying little; but it came to be fully understood that any man absenting himself after a certain hour and reported out of barracks, would be dealt by with the utmost rigour of the military law.

"We'd be cut in little ribbings, an' 'ung up on blooming 'ooks," said the smallest band-boy but one, to the smallest on record, "if we was found out all a-walkin', ever so hinnercent. You look to yersel', my fine fellow"—and with this grim warning departed.

#### DIVIDEND DAY.

THERE is no very perceptible increase in the crowds that swarm about the great centre of the City, countless as the motes in a sunbeam, or as ants in the midst of an ant-hill, yet they are there, and form a distinct element in the throng—the anxious if presumably happy people who have dividends to draw, and who have come to draw them. Even in the omnibuses they are recognisable, if only by the nervous way in which they look around, and their cautious avoidance of the word "Bank." "Conductor, how near do you go to the Royal Exchange?" asks a plump dame in black satin. "Bank, lady," replies the conductor stolidly. "Oh, I don't want to go there," murmurs the other, with an uneasy glance at a man sitting near her, who certainly has a furtive look about him. And when madame cautiously alights at the Bank corner, she sees with alarm that the furtive man has alighted too, and is dogging her footsteps. It is astonishing, too,

to see how many young women are trotting along towards the Bank, to disappear swiftly round the corner. One does not associate youth and beauty with the sweet simplicity of the three per cents.—no longer three, alas! or so sweetly simple as of old—but here they are, nevertheless, and giving the asthmatic old annuitant the go-by in the race for the Bank counters. Lady Lackpenny was a little surprised when her pretty housemaid asked for a morning's leave to go and "draw her dividends," but she acceded with gracious alacrity. And the governess element is well represented, pale faces growing paler and more faded year by year, but brightening up in the reflection of the pink dividend warrant.

Not many carriages drive up to the Bank nowadays. Rich people draw their dividends through their bankers, and City people say that dividend day is not what it used to be before dividend warrants could be sent by post and cashed through bankers. For in the old days it was necessary to appear "personally or by attorney," and it was the case that very large sums would be drawn over the counter by people who had an objection to signing "powers of attorney." But not long ago a handsome carriage and pair might, on dividend days, be seen waiting in Gresham Street while its mistress, with the greatest precautions to avoid being seen, made her way to the Bank to draw a quarter's annuity, amounting, perhaps, to some thirty pounds. She was rich, with many thousands a year, but this little hoard that nobody knew about she prized more than all the rest of her possessions. Annuitants generally come on foot, and mostly have a hale and hearty appearance, considering their years, for young annuitants are rare; and when they have drawn their money, they button it up tightly and walk away with an air of determination that seems to say that this particular dividend is not adapted for further division.

The white-headed old gentleman who hobbles along so gaily, and who has a word for the policeman at the corner as well as for the porter within the gateway, can he possibly be a survivor from the old brigade who, when the century was young, anyhow in the thirties or early forties, bought annuities from a Government that had planned them on a too liberal scale? The State accountants had calculated their rates on tables of the average duration of life, which hardly allotted to the average

man or woman his or her due length of days ; a fault which worked exceedingly to the advantage of life insurance companies, for whom the tables were compiled, but which proved very much otherwise to the granters of annuities. It was especially in the more advanced ages that the due "expectation of life," had been understated, and speculators and stockbrokers soon found out the weak points of the scheme, and rushed in with customary enthusiasm.

Then came a good time for many of the aged poor, especially in the Highlands of Scotland, where hale and hearty shepherds, gillies, fishermen and others of an advanced age were in great demand. At ninety years of age the sum of a hundred pounds bought an annuity of sixty-five pounds a year. And as many of these hearty old fellows lived on to ninety-seven or eight, it may be imagined what a profit accrued to outsiders who had bought annuities on their lives. The benefit to the old people was indirect, for those who were thus peculiarly interested in their welfare would take care they did not die from hardship or want. It is said that the Marquis of Hertford, whose eccentricities were the talk of Paris at the period in question, increased his enormous fortune by speculating heavily on the lives of his tenants. This chase for hale old men lasted for some years, but although no harm could accrue to the old people from the use to which they were turned, yet there were many who had a sturdy objection to be made the subjects of speculation. The consent, indeed, of the subject was not indispensable, but it was necessary to prove his age, for which purpose certificates of birth or baptism were required, and these were often difficult to obtain where the obstinate veteran refused information.

One of these veterans, a fisherman strong and hearty, in his ninetieth year, had often been stalked by annuity hunters, but could not be had by any of them. Nobody knew the place of his birth, and Donald was inaccessible to all offers. A spirited stockbroker who was also a good fisherman undertook to bring Donald to bay, for a thumping wager as well as the chances of profit. With rod and reel he threw himself in Donald's way, took the old man's fancy by his enthusiasm for the craft, and soon became his intimate friend and companion. They slept in the same shieling, shared each other's parritch and brose, told to one another many incidents of their

lives, as they met at the end of the day's fishing. After some months of this work the wily one ventured to put the question carelessly :

"Donald, lad, where was you born?"

Donald turned on his questioner a keen and icy glance.

"Eh! the ways of the world!" he cried, and with that he strode out of the wigwam and was no more seen.

If our venerable annuitant remembers something of those days, he may also have something to say as to the altered aspect of affairs at the Bank. You don't go in by the front door to get your dividends; that way leads to the issue department, and the Ionic portico, under which you pass to change notes for gold or vice versa, is the handsomest and oldest part of the Bank, and once was the site of the house and gardens of the governor of the Bank. This was completed in 1734, and fifty years after the wings were built, while further alterations were carried out early in the present century by Sir John Soane, the founder of the museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and quite at home in anything squat and sombre. But the building appeals to the imagination as the repository of so much solid wealth, and probably none of the dividend crowd give it a second glance, but make straight for their own especial portal, which is at the side just opposite the Stock Exchange; which, indeed, was planted where it stands in order to be handy to the Bank.

Ascending the steps and coming to a glazed screen, where a messenger in livery takes a general view of things going on, you are carried along with a stream of people all intent on their own affairs—brokers with clients; smart jobbers in the shiniest of hats, and brokers' clerks without any at all; women of all ages and of every variety of costume, except perhaps the ultra-fashionable; fresh-coloured faces from the country, dim yellow visages of London anchorites. Here is one, a gentleman of ancient lineage and once high fortunes, now a denizen of one of the lowest slums. His way of living is a mystery to all about him. If it were known that he drew his dividends every quarter, the day would be one of peril for his life. Another man, it is said, discharges himself from the workhouse before the dividends are paid. He has a respectable suit of clothes in pawn, and with his dividends he dashes about in full enjoyment of his temporary wealth, and when

it is all gone he goes back to the work-house again. It is quite possible, indeed, that the master thief himself and many of his apprentices may be among the crowd, not on predatory business bent, but a little anxious as to the security of their own particular dividends.

For the British funds are the only kind of security in the civilised world to which a man's or woman's face is the only title-deed. A man may possess Consols—the name will survive in literature although on the Stock Exchange it may become obsolete—to any amount without the existence of a scrap of paper or a line of writing to betray the fact. And all this throng of people, who flock in all day long, are regarded by the Bank as so many accounts, with balances due to be paid on demand.

But now you find yourself in a handsome room or hall that reminds one of the old Irish Commons House, now the Bank of Ireland, for it is a lofty rotunda with a circular counter in the middle, with ever so many glazed pens for the paying clerks, all of whom are busy enough weighing gold or counting over notes, or clashing bags of silver on the polished surface. It is a silent scene, too, and the stillness is only broken by the jingle of coin and the ring of copper shovels and scales. It was quite otherwise once upon a time in this rotunda, which was formerly a place of meeting for brokers and others, a kind of succursal to the Stock Exchange, where much of the business in Government securities was conducted. When the stockbrokers were at last shut out in order to extend the business part of the Bank, they resented the exclusion which was carried out with some brusqueness; and it is said that the relations between the "old lady" of Threadneedle Street and the Stock Exchange have never since been marked by the cordiality that formerly prevailed. Anyhow, when the then governor of the Bank became subsequently bankrupt, it is said that the announcement was greeted with three cheers on the Stock Exchange.

A governor of the Bank is no more exempt from liability to future misfortune than any other human creature. But for a governor to fail during his term of office, as did Mr. R. M. Raikes in 1834, was an affair which agitated the public mind a good deal. It was just half a century ago, and the autumn dividends were coming due, and never was seen such a

rush to be paid. People fought and scrambled for their places at the desks, and at the least accidental delay in payment the report went round that the Bank was going to "bust." At that time, however, there was a good deal more function and trouble in paying dividends than now, the whole process of accounts having been much simplified in 1842 by a young official, Mr. William Ray Smee.

There is no statue or bust of Mr. Smee, as far as we know, in any part of the Bank of England, and yet here in the rotunda, in the midst of all this order and smoothness of detail, his statue should represent the presiding genius of the place.

In the great room beyond the rotunda is a sight that must awake everybody's interest. There on the shelves above the heads of the officials are the parchment-bound volumes, which form the Golden Book of the British nation. To have your name well inscribed between these covers is to have all the good things of life at your disposal: wealth without care, honour without effort, while at any moment your possessions may be turned into current coin by a mere stroke of the pen. But in the departmental eye you are of equal importance, whether you hold stock to the amount of a pound or a million. There are accounts, indeed, as small as a penny, while the highest individual score amounted some time ago to five and three-quarter millions. As to the number of accounts, which means the number of dividend drawers, they were estimated in 1842 at half a million, but the number has probably decreased very much since then, and at the date of the conversion effected by Mr. Goschen a few years ago, the three principal stocks showed only about a hundred and seventy thousand accounts.

In these parchment-covered volumes the Smiths, as might be expected, hold the place of honour. In the year of the conversion there were nearly five thousand five hundred Smiths in the books, over five hundred of whom bore the name of John. The Browns were nearly half as numerous, and the Joneses ran them close—of a frugal race is Shenkin—and these three only are placed, other surnames being hopelessly distanced. As to how the army of dividend drawers are identified, that is the secret of the Bank, but it is very rarely that personation is attempted, and still more rarely with success. The few successful frauds that have come to light have, for the most part, been suggested by

corrupt officials, and carried out by accomplices outside.

A curious case occurred in the forties, the instigator of which was a clerk in charge of "unclaimed stock." This last is an item which excites everybody's curiosity and interest. Is it possible that there is a large sum actually going begging, dividends accumulating to the amount of millions, which might lawfully belong to you or me if we were duly advised of our rights? It is possible, though far from probable, as the case in question will show. Here was an account in the name of Ann Slack, spinster, who held a sum of six thousand six hundred Consols and three thousand five hundred Reduced. On the former she had drawn her dividends regularly, of the latter she knew nothing, as it had been invested for her by her trustee, who died suddenly without fully informing her as to her affairs. For ten years the unclaimed dividends were brought forward to next account; at the end of that time, in compliance with the directions of an Act of Parliament, the whole amount was transferred to the Commissioners of the National Debt. And unclaimed the three thousand five hundred pounds would probably have remained till the end of time, but for the fraudulent clerk above mentioned. This person communicated to an equally unscrupulous friend the secret of the unclaimed stock. The first thing that suggested itself was to find out the right owner, which was easy enough, for her address was known at the Bank, and obtain from her a handsome sum for the information. But it was found easier to invent another Ann Slack, to imagine her death, and have it registered as a fact; to fabricate the will of the fabulous Ann; and to get one Emma, a pretty milliner at Bristol, to personate her niece and sole legatee. All worked admirably. The stock was retransferred and sold, the broker who carried out the transaction identified Emma Slack as a pure formality, and the money was drawn and divided. Emma got a thousand pound note as her share, and carried it off to Bristol, where it was publicly exhibited as the result of a charming freak of fortune. Detection seemed impossible, for nobody was the wiser or the poorer for the whole transaction. Detection resulted, nevertheless, from a very simple circumstance. Ann Slack's death, of which the certificate was filed at the Bank, was noted in the books against both accounts, and when Miss

Slack came as usual to draw her dividends she was informed that she was dead, and could not have them. Hence came enquiry and exposure, resulting in the punishment of the lawyer, who, as an alleged accomplice, had taken part in the transaction, the other culprits giving evidence against him. Emma had to give up her thousand pound note, while Ann, the genuine Ann, came to her own again. Thus it is easy to see how unclaimed dividends accumulate. It happens not unfrequently that people who have investments here and there are reticent about them even with their nearest friends. Death comes unexpectedly, and there is nothing to show for the little hoard in the public funds, which consequently goes in the end to reduce the public burdens. Sometimes, too, it may be suspected, the proceeds of robberies or successful frauds find their way into the three per cents; the investor is "put away," and does not survive his term of imprisonment, and so the public is the gainer.

But such secretive persons are the exception. Most people are rather proud of having dividends to draw, and make no secret of their quarterly excursions to the Bank. And the conversion of 1889—Redemption Day was the sixth of July in that year, when everything was changed—has had the result of rather increasing the autumnal throng, for all State dividends are now paid quarterly, while most of the old stocks were paid half-yearly, Consols, which formed by far the largest "market," having been payable January and July. And now the bustle of one dividend day is very much like that of another. In one way or another about five millions of money are thus distributed, much of it transferred by the stroke of a pen to the impersonal holders of huge blocks of stock, such as public institutions, the Law Courts, Savings Bank Commissioners, and others of the sort. Bankers, too, carry off their share quietly enough, and the Stock Exchange takes a huge cantle without making a fuss over it, although for some little time after, the discount markets are said to be "flooded" with dividend money.

#### THE CANDID FRIEND.

THERE are few people who do not, at some period of their lives, suffer from the nuisance known as a candid friend. Few people, that is, excepting those who are



so violent-tempered and overbearing—and who, by the way, are generally candid friends themselves—that even a person burdened with more than a usual amount of superfluous candour dares not bestow any of it upon them.

A candid friend is a pest to society at large, and the harm it does by its ravages will never be known until the secrets of all hearts are revealed. Unless a few of them are murdered by way of encouragement to others to hold their peace, there appears to be no way of checking the evil. Failing this stringent measure, nothing remains but to diagnose their characteristics and to point out a few of the most palpable evils of which overmuch candour is the cause, in the hope that by so doing some may recognise candid friendship at its first approach, and flee what they are powerless to resist.

First, then, there is the candid friend direct, and the candid friend circumlocutory, between which lies this difference, that the former takes your head off brutally with an axe, and the latter performs the same operation with the mechanical precision of the guillotine. In either case you are headless; the means employed are merely a matter of taste and breeding. The candid friend is always thoroughly imbued with a sense of rectitude, duty, sincerity, truthfulness, and honesty of purpose, combined with a conviction of his fitness for the post of judge, teacher, guide, and reformer. The mainspring of the candid friend's course of conduct is "swagger," a cocksureness of his powers of insight and intuition accompanied with a more or less conscious pleasure in giving pain. I say more or less conscious, because sometimes the candid friend would feel justly indignant at the accusation; nevertheless the coarse relish for cruelty is there, though unsuspected, and there is a pleasure felt in the power to harass and annoy even the people for whom the candid friend may have a strong affection and respect.

"Would you have me say what is untrue?" asks a candid friend, with a fine show of indignation when remonstrated with. My candid friend, calm yourself, this virtuous outburst is unnecessary. There is an old proverb to the effect that one should always speak the truth, but that the truth should not always be spoken. But here is the rock on which our candid friend splits. So great is his passion for truth that he must

proclaim it aloud at all times and in all places. He knows all your weaknesses and peculiarities of character and temper, and tells you of them.

Your nose has a slight inclination towards one cheek, or you have a trifling cast in one eye; your looking-glass tells you this twice a day at the least, but the candid friend is not satisfied till he has told you also. "Why shouldn't I?" he asks. "It is the truth." Your hair is becoming brindled; you broke a tooth the other day; your waistcoat is growing a little tight about the lower buttons; you feel an increasing inclination to lose a train rather than run for it; you are perfectly conscious of these trifles, they annoy you, and you are glad to think of them as little as possible; but unfortunately your candid friend knows them too, and he lets you know that he knows them. If he is a direct candid friend he will tell you bluntly what he has observed, as though he were under the impression that it might have escaped your notice; but if he is of the circumlocutory sort, he will either congratulate you on not being such a fool as to dye your hair, although it will soon be white, or he will recommend you somebody's patent wash or restorer, and at the same time give you the address of his own particular dentist. You smile amiably at him as you shake hands in farewell, but if you did just what inclination prompts you to do, you would seize him by the throat and knock his head against the first convenient wall. Only a small wound to your vanity after all. Granted, my candid friend, but is it necessary to go through the world sticking pins into people, be those pins ever so tiny and the tissue into which you insert them ever so adipose?

Your coat is cut on a new pattern, or your last bonnet is a fresh departure; but unless they suit you down to the ground, do not hope to escape your candid friend's criticism. You rather fancied yourself before: but, having received it, you are a limp creature indeed. You cannot afford to give the coat away, and you must wear it out, and knowing this, it was a piece of gratuitous spite on the part of the candid friend to make you feel you had to go about for six months looking like a Bank Holiday 'Arry.

But these things, unpleasant and annoying as they are, are nothing when compared with the higher branches of the candid friend's work. Where before he

has but outraged your self-respect, and torn in shreds the cobweb of your vanity, now, unless you chance to be very strong indeed, he lays waste the garden of all your fairest hopes and ambitions.

Are you in business? Ah, well, he soon lets you know that he has a very poor opinion of your powers, and by disheartening and frightening you he does his best to help you along the road to that Bankruptcy Court which he is sure is your inevitable bourne. If you have taken orders, he knows all about your nervousness in the pulpit, your tongue-tiedness in face of distress, and hastens to assure you with all the earnestness of a true friend that you had much better have been apprenticed to a decent trade, for a curate at about eighty pounds a year you will most certainly remain all your life. Are you a barrister? Well, he gives you credit for hard work, but he knows—bless you, what is there the candid friend does not know?—that you have no special gifts, and will, in all probability, remain briefless till the end of time, unless you are fortunate enough to marry “a rich solicitor’s daughter,” when, as he tells you with a grin, you may be shoved into good things, which will be a bad look-out for the clients.

Do you write? Oh, how your candid friend shakes his head over your last novel or play, or whatever it is! You are not doing nearly such good work as you did two years ago, and he mutters about decaying powers and writing yourself out, till, like Henry the Second, you groan, “Who will rid me of this man?” Perhaps you fancy you can paint, in which case hanging committees, buyers, critics, and dealers are not the most savage lions in your path if you happen to be blessed with a candid friend. The worst of it is, the man is a friend, and will do you a good turn if he can—of course without much trouble to himself—also to a certain extent he knows what he is talking about, so that you are bound to have some respect for his opinion. He begins by gently prancing round your work, rather in the manner of the commencement of a Sioux war dance. You grow anxious, and, losing your head, in a moment of temporary aberration you ask his opinion. Whoop! You’ve got it. Your shadows are opaque and your lights pasty; your drawing is weak and your technique bad; your colour is crude, and the whole thing out of tone, and at the end the sum and substance of it all is that if he—the candid friend—painted as badly as

you do, he would never touch a brush again as long as he lived.

“Hope I have not hurt you, old fellow, but you would ask my candid opinion, so I was bound to give it,” he says.

The giving up of this writing, or composing, or painting, or whatever it is, may mean a great deal to you. Probably you are not a genius, for geniuses are scarce, but probably also the desire and inclination which have led you in a certain direction imply a certain capacity, which the candid friend by his liberal supply of cold water has done his best to dull and deaden. With equal truth he might just as easily have pointed out some of your worst faults, while at the same time, by the bestowal of a little judicious praise of the better qualities in your work, he would have heartened you for attacking the difficulties. He would have left you strengthened, braced; by the very faith which your friend appeared to have in you, you would be led on to do better and stronger work; you would feel that you owed it to yourself to justify his opinion. You do not teach a child to walk by first breaking its legs. Very strong men and women can fling aside all the adverse criticism the most candid friend can give, and fight their way in the teeth of opposition, but we are not all strong—very few of us are, indeed, and the majority want helping and cheering along the uphill road. The world outside is too busy and hurried to heed our individual concerns, and if we cannot rely upon our friends for the meat of encouragement, and for the oil and wine of sympathy, we are in hard case indeed.

How many little wayside flowers of refined thought and graceful idea, of dainty sketch and lilting air, which would have given pleasure to the creator and recipient alike, have been trampled under the iron heel of the candid friend, it is out of our power to count.

But oh, candid friend, think before you speak—for who made you a last appeal in matters great and small? Be more humble, and remember you are neither the “Athenæum” nor the “Saturday Review.” Also hunt up your neglected *Le Sage*, and read therein of a certain scene between one *Gil Blas* and a Bishop whose work he presumed to criticise. Take to heart the punishment bestowed upon the tactless fool, whose want of wit led him to translate too literally the request for a candid opinion, and then, like Nathan of old, say to thyself, “Thou art the man.”

## FINIS.

The end draws near. By Fates unseen directed  
Our paths diverging tend.  
To lives monotonous the Unexpected  
Comes as a friend,  
While for a moment joyous smiles of meeting  
The gathering shades dispel.  
"Ave et Vale!" Lo! the ancient greeting,  
Hail, and Farewell!

A moment more! And sadness follows after,  
In bursts of keen regret  
That put to silence all the happy laughter  
Wherewith we met.  
The past is dead, the present swiftly fading,  
And in the future dwell  
Hopes faint and few, our longing glance evading.  
Hail, and Farewell!

The time has come! Mid alien scenes and faces  
Our lessening lives must lie,  
And pass henceforth through solitary places  
Beneath a stormy sky.  
Clasp hands, old friend! Against our best  
endeavour  
The tides of Memory swell.  
Part we as those who part indeed for ever.  
Hail, and Farewell!

## A STUDY IN CHARACTER.

## A COMPLETE STORY.

IT was towards the beginning of July, 1891, that I was foiled for the fourth time in my search for the ideal. The ideal anything is difficult enough to attain to; but if you happen to be looking for the ideal woman, you have got all your work cut out for you, and I happened to be looking for the ideal woman. In other words, I was seeking a suitable wife, and had been rej—disappointed on four occasions. No doubt my standard is a high one, and perhaps it is owing to that fact that I am still unmarried, though I have made several additional attempts since the time of which I am now writing. Somehow all the women I have met have fallen lamentably short of the excellence my perhaps fastidious taste imperatively demands; but I must confess that it was not until I had actually proposed to some of them that I discovered how utterly unworthy of me they really were. And here let me dispose, once and for all, of the baseless and malicious fabrications so freely put about to my disparagement by certain of my friends, who venture to insinuate that my pursuit of the ideal woman is nothing more or less than a mercenary search for an heiress who "will have me"—such is their horrible expression. They make a great deal of capital out of the fact that all the ladies in whom I have fancied for a few fleeting weeks that I recognised the glorious ideal which I have so long pursued, have without exception been remarkably well-

off. I have no patience with such malignant cackle. The idol I have set up in my own mind possesses a thousand and one perfections such as these ribald knaves have never even dreamt of, although I will frankly admit that of those perfections money is emphatically one. The ideal woman should certainly possess a comfortable fortune of her own; but quite as certainly she ought to be endowed with many less material gifts as well.

Take Miss Blades, for instance. She was young, pretty, passably clever, and very rich, but her deplorable lack of taste was sufficient to spoil everything. This defect, which I discovered in the conservatory at the Warringtons' ball, upset me very much. It opened my eyes to the fact that I had been pursuing a will-of-the-wisp, and had made my fourth mistake in my quest of the ideal woman. The consequent disappointment gave me a great longing for change of air. I would leave London for a time and lead a pure and simple life, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," which in my heart I have always thoroughly despised. Indeed, I have perhaps despised it too thoroughly, and have been led thereby to neglect the practical through over-much interest in the ideal. When one has one's eyes perpetually fixed on the stars, he may chance to wander into a bog; and, just at that time, I discovered that I had without doubt strayed into something very like a morass. My income is not a large one, and though I spend every penny of it on myself, I can never quite make both ends meet. My tastes are expensive, but of course that is the fault of the artistic temperament which I possess in a very marked degree. I like everything around me to be beautiful, and I have a poet's dislike—and, were it not for the editors, I too would be a poet—for the bad and worthless in any form, but more especially in the form of wine or cigars. Nature made only one mistake when she modelled me: she ought to have made me heir to at least five thousand pounds a year. Unfortunately my income only numbers as many hundreds, and as I have never stinted myself—I hate your mean men—I have sometimes found myself financially embarrassed. On such occasions I find the country air very beneficial and retire to economise at a favourite resort of mine, an old-fashioned little town in the Midlands, Beardingham by name.

So when I had had my fourth illusion shattered, and simultaneously discovered

that certain rude and grasping tradesmen had begun to convert my stairs and doorstep into a kind of morning lounge, I thought it high time to adopt my usual remedy, and start off to Beard'ingham in search of simplicity. And thus, one day in the middle of July, I found myself alighting at the "George Hotel," in the queer, straggling old High Street, while twenty-four hours later I was comfortably established in the really excellent lodgings which I had always occupied during my previous visits.

My next step was to look up some of my old friends, for I had made a good many in the course of those former visits of mine. It is true that they were not exactly the kind of people one would care to know in town, but in the country it does not do to be too particular. You would not like to appear in the Park in the rough tweed suit and deerstalker which are quite good enough for the country lanes; and similarly you would—at least, I know I would—decline to walk down Piccadilly with a man who might be your bosom friend at a place like Beardingham. But the noble savage is always tolerable in his native wilds. At all events, I have always thought so, for I am singularly free from all prejudices. If a man will welcome me cordially, and offer me his rough but ready hospitality, I am always willing to accept it, even though the man himself be a barbarian. In fact, I very rarely refuse anything that is offered me; I hate hurting people's feelings—in that way. I am a sociable man, too, and always eager to be amused, therefore the Beardingham entertainments were welcome to me, for if I could not always laugh with my hosts, I could always laugh at them. And so I had allowed myself to drift into intimacy with a good many of the local yokels.

Perhaps the people I knew best of all were the Swoggses—there's a name for you!—who lived in a pretentious villa a mile or two out of the town. Mr. Swoggs was a brewer, and was understood to be a "warm man"; Mrs. Swoggs was a stout, bustling, florid-faced lady, who always gave one the impression that she was a very warm woman; their two daughters were remarkable for nothing save their plainness. Mr. Swoggs went in strongly for the genial line of business—no doubt as a brewer this was expected of him—and, as Mrs. Swoggs liked to be a leader of society, they gave frequent parties to the chosen of Beardingham. She had soon heard of

my arrival in the town, as she heard of everything, and the very next morning I received a note, enclosing a card for one of these "functions," which was to take place the same evening, and begging me to waive ceremony and accept the invitation. And I complied without hesitation, for I knew that it would give me a capital chance of renewing relations with most of my former friends in a bunch, and obviate the necessity of hunting them up in detail.

About ten o'clock that night, therefore, I arrived at "Brankmere," as the Swoggses called their house, and was effusively welcomed by its mistress. She pinned me up in a corner and overwhelmed me with a torrent of talk as weak and washy as her husband's beer; but as she was quite satisfied with an occasional "yes" or "no," or a murmur that might mean either or nothing at all, I had plenty of leisure to scan the company. It was of the usual class, and I recognised many a familiar face; but suddenly I started as my eyes fell on a slim figure in white standing in the far corner. It was only a girl—but such a girl! I had never expected to see anything like her at Mrs. Swoggs's, and my astonishment was so great that even that good lady noticed it.

"Ah, Mr. Scroyle," she cried, smacking me on the arm with her fan in the elephantine way she considers playful, "you are looking at Maud Hatherly, I know! Isn't she pretty?"

Pretty! She was charming; though I don't think I could say exactly where the charm lay, and in fact I don't intend to try. It is absurd to dissect beauty, and to enumerate each feature, like an auctioneer describing an eligible villa residence. Suffice it to say, that though everybody has his own private standard, there are some few girls whom all—all men, at least—admit to be beautiful, and that Miss Hatherly was one of these few. I know that I had never seen any one who struck me more, and for one brief moment I thought that I had at last found the paragon I had so long pursued. Was it possible that, after I had searched London for the ideal woman in vain, I had actually found her, by accident, as it were, in quiet little Beardingham? But alas! Mr. Swoggs's very next words dispelled this fond—and fifth—illusion.

"She is staying with us for a short holiday," she said.

A holiday! that meant that she worked; that she had no money of her own, or only

very little. Evidently she was not the ideal woman; for I have already explained that, to my mind, any rough contact with the real is bound to rob the ideal of some of its best features, and that the perfect woman should always have enough to keep herself in comfort—and her husband.

"Her holiday!" I said to Mrs. Swoggs. "Why, at her age her whole life should be one long holiday!"

"Ah, that's all very well when you happen to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth," replied Mrs. Swoggs, with a broad smile which showed that, if she had been so favoured by fortune, she had started in life with quite a respectable capital in silver; "but some of us are born to labour."

"Labour, ugh! I hate the mere sound of the ugly word in connection with any one like Miss Hatherly," I added hastily.

"Well, she isn't of your opinion, I can tell you. She is very independent, and talks very nicely about the Dignity of Work."

Now, I hate girls to be independent—save by inheritance—and the Dignity of Work is simply boosh. Where's the dignity of doing what one's compelled to do? You might as well talk of the dignity of taking medicine; indeed, work is a kind of medicine—to be taken daily before you can have your meals. However, I only said:

"Would you be so kind as to introduce me?"

"Certainly, Mr. Scroyle," she answered promptly; "indeed, I hope you will see a good deal of her and of us, during the next three weeks. She will be with us about that time, I think, and I'm sure we'll all be very sorry to lose her. She was Nellie's great friend at school, but this is only her first visit here. I hope we'll often have her in future."

In a minute or two more the ceremony had been performed and I was chatting briskly with Miss Hatherly, quite at my ease. She talked well, and we seemed to have many things in common; even our "steps" agreed. I had one waltz with her then and another later in the evening, by which time our intimacy had advanced considerably that she consented to "sit out" a third. It was during the conversation that ensued that I ascertained—though, alas! nothing forewarned me of the terrible significance of the discovery—that, in addition to her other work, which, as I afterwards heard, was the fascinating

occupation of "a companion," she had literary aspirations and had dabbled in ink. It came about through my quoting some of my poetry to her, for I always make a point of quoting my best lines to my acquaintances. For one thing, it saves me the trouble of keeping a lot of other people's stuff in my head; for another, it is the only way I can see of giving my work to the world under the present disgraceful system under which our magazines and periodicals are conducted. There is, I may say, an organised conspiracy against me, though I gave Miss Hatherly to understand that I had "published." I find people sceptical—at first, at all events—about that conspiracy. Then she admitted that she, too, had done some literary work, though exclusively in the prose department.

"I have sent several spies into the Promised Land," she remarked, "but unluckily, the majority of them have come back. They report that the way to the kingdom is beset by a very fierce tribe called Editors. Such captives as they make are doomed to an ignominious end, unless they pay ransom—in stamps—when they are allowed to return whence they came. Such, however, as are clever enough to ingratiate themselves with the savages are allowed to pass; and one or two of mine, having been lucky enough to do so, have sent back messages which show there is milk and honey in the country—when you get there."

"They are terrible people, though, the Editors!" I said with feeling.

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose they act as a kind of Immigration Board. They let the healthy pass into the country; it is only the weak and sickly they keep out."

"But they sometimes make mistakes," I retorted bitterly, as I thought of a well-stocked box in my London rooms; "I think they make a great many mistakes." Why, in my case alone, they have made exactly sixty-two!

And then we began to talk about something a great deal more interesting than editors. In short, we got on capitally together, and I could see that I had impressed her favourably. As for me, I felt, as I went home in the early morning, that if Miss Hatherly had only had money I would never have thought of looking elsewhere for a wife. As it was, though nothing could ever come of it, I could not think of giving up her society in such a dull little place as Beardingham. On the

contrary, I determined to see as much of her as possible during her stay; and, though I did reflect with some compunction that it might endanger her peace of mind to meet me too often, I could not deny myself the pleasure of seeing more of her. It would be sufficient, I thought, to drop a few hints, which would show that, though I admired her greatly, circumstances forbade me to marry anybody without money. It might be natural for her to think of love; but, if she clearly understood that nothing serious was possible, she would not be likely to allow her feelings to get beyond her control. Such were my reflections, and I take some credit to myself for thinking of such a thing at all. There are some men who would think nothing of playing with a girl's heart and wantonly wrecking her happiness; but, thank Heaven! I am not such a scoundrel. To my mind such conduct is worse than disgraceful, it is criminal; but I am sure that every one will agree with me that I acted rightly in adopting the course I chose. It was only fair to Miss Hatherly to let her know that I could not afford to marry her. Bread and cheese is too coarse a diet to be associated with such ethereal fare as kisses; they should be coupled with chicken and champagne, at the very least. Now, I am quite willing to provide any amount of kisses; but, unfortunately, I am compelled to look to my wife for the chicken and champagne. It was my obvious duty to let Miss Hatherly know that.

Let me condense into a few lines the events of the next three weeks. Of course I met Miss Hatherly constantly, and, equally of course, I found it impossible to confine our intercourse within the lines prudence had originally laid down. At one time, indeed, matters took a really serious turn. I assure you that one evening I caught myself drivelling about "the world well lost for love," "love in a cottage," and similar twaddle, only restoring myself to sanity by a careful study of all my unpaid bills. And if I was so affected, what was likely to be the condition of a warm-hearted, impulsive girl? Alas! my mind misgave me. For some time past I had noticed that she appeared to hang upon my words, and to follow me with her eyes when I was engaged with others. We had been playing with fire too long; it was time to put an end to the game before we burnt our fingers too badly. Sincerely did I hope it might not be too late.

I would go away at once, I said to myself resolutely. I would feign a call to London on important business and quit Beardingham for a week. Ere I returned Miss Hatherly's holiday would have come to an end, and she would have departed. In all probability we would never meet again. It was a sad thought, it pained me excessively, yet it did not make me hesitate. The very next morning I walked over to "Branksmere" to announce my departure and take my leave.

I found her near the tennis-lawn, where the Misses Swoggs were playing a noisy game with two gallants from the town. Seated on the bank beside her, I spoke those last words which are always hard to say, but doubly so when one's real meaning can only be hinted at. Yet I managed to talk fluently enough, and she listened attentively, though silently, while below us the Misses Swoggs bounded about the lawn, knocking the balls about and bandying idiotic jokes, but luckily not paying the least attention to us. I need not repeat what I said; the words in themselves were poor and meaningless, but I think I made them sound full of sincerity and significance. Of course I reviled fate, talked darkly of destiny, and hinted that in all I did I was actuated by a desire for her real happiness and impelled by a high sense of duty. Then I said good-bye in a few simple words, and she replied in a voice trembling with emotion. I think she was going to speak very plainly to me—her manner somehow gave me that impression—but the tennis game had been lost, and won by this time, and the perspiring players were upon us before she had time to say more than a few words. I had no other chance of speaking privately with her, and had to include her in the general farewell when I took my leave half an hour later. I left her looking pale, but so composed that no one who did not know her secret would have guessed what a tumult doubtless raged below that calm exterior.

As I walked home along the white, dusty road; and later on, as I sat before the empty grate in my sitting-room, staring fixedly at the hideous pink roses with which it was embellished; I pondered, sorrowfully enough, all the unhappy love-stories I had ever heard of, from "Lancelot and Elaine" down to the latest thing in three volumes, and came to the conclusion that ours was the unhappiest of the lot. I could not help wondering whether Maud was of the stuff of which Elaines were

made. Certainly she seemed to be one of those women who love deeply or not at all, and I feared that more harm might come of our ill-starred romance than I had ever anticipated. Still, she was too sensible to pine away like the love-sick Maid of Astolat, and, in addition, she had her work to engross her attention. She would rouse herself; she would strive to forget her sorrows in constant occupation; and in time, perhaps, she might be able to look back with regret but no longer with pain to the three golden weeks we spent together at Beardingham. Of myself I will say nothing, though I would not have you think I suffered nothing. I do not wish to make myself out a hero, and therefore I will not tell how much it cost me to cut myself adrift. That it cost me much I will freely admit, though at the time I was hardly aware how much, for—with the unselfishness of love—I was really thinking more about the pain the poor girl was suffering than of the wound I had myself received. Why, oh why, was she not a heiress?

It was in the middle of last summer that I lost another illusion—my tenth—and decided to work off my disappointment in travel. I chose Switzerland for my trip, and one evening in early autumn found me comfortably seated in the verandah of an Interlaken hotel, smoking and building castles in the air—a favourite after-dinner amusement of mine. It was a beautiful evening, so cool and pleasant that cigar after cigar was smoked out, and still I sat on; when suddenly I started up in my chair and pricked up my ears, for I had heard a well-remembered voice which could still, apparently, make my pulses bound. I looked round hastily to see whence it came, and then I perceived that a French window a little to my left had been swung back, and that some ladies, from whom it screened me, for it opened outwards, were looking out on the night. Was it possible? Surely I could not be mistaken in the voice? No; it was Maud Hatherly's, and therefore Maud Hatherly was here—here at Interlaken, only divided from me by a pane of glass and a flimsy curtain. Come! she had not died of her love after all, then! Upon my word, I was really glad that she had not carried her constancy so far.

Still, I must confess that it gave me a distinct shock when I heard her voice again, making some light remark which ended in a ringing laugh. To die would, perhaps, have been going too far in one direction,

but I began to fear that she had erred in the other. Of course I had always hoped that she would get over her disappointment some day; wounds that are not mortal are bound to close in time. But I really did think that she might have remembered me a little longer. It is true that

Each day brings its petty dust  
Our soon-choked souls to fill;  
And we forget because we must,  
And not because we will.

But her soul appeared to have got choked very quickly. It all happened little more than two years ago. Barely two years ago! And she could laugh!

"Really, Maud," prattled a voice, which somehow seemed to me to belong to the type of woman always called "motherly," "it is quite a surprise to come across you here! And travelling with friends for pleasure, too! See what it is to be a successful author. And that reminds me to congratulate you on your book. I assure you we all read 'Gartshoyn'—isn't that the name?—with the greatest interest."

"Gartshoyn!" That was the name of a novel by an anonymous author that I had read in the Tauchnitz edition only the week before. It had met with a good deal of success in the preceding season, and had received very favourable treatment from the critics. Moreover, the book had pleased me. Though I felt that if I cared to exert my powers to their full extent I could do better myself, there were some parts of it which I found really amusing. And Maud Hatherly was the author! It quite took my breath away.

"I don't know how you think of all these things, I'm sure!" the voice went on cheerfully; "and it's really very clever. A letter's as much as I can manage, I assure you. But Mr. Dobson really enjoyed your book immensely. He says that that Rupert Chilblain——"

"Childane, ma," snapped a short, sharp little voice.

"I said Childane," retorted the other voice—perhaps not quite so "motherly" on this occasion—with a shameless disregard of truth. "Mr. Dobson says, my dear Maud, that that Rupert Chilblain—Childane is a most amusing character. I'm sure I don't know when he laughed so much."

Miss Hatherly murmured some words which I could not catch.

"Oh, but he was perfectly outrageous, I assure you. You should have heard him laughing. Now where did you get your

idea of such a man as that? All out of your own head?"

The worthy lady was evidently one of those individuals who, in girlhood, open their dolls to see what is inside of them, and subsequently walk through life ask'ng information at every step, and about everything they chance to see.

"Well, not entirely," Miss Hatherly replied. "Indeed, I may say I drew him from the life."

"Now, that's very interesting!" babbled the voice. "From the life, you say? But dear me, where could you meet a man like that, if I may ask?"

"Oh, at a place called Beardingham. I don't suppose you've ever been there, though."

At Beardingham! I knew most of the people there, and I wondered whom she had selected for her model. Rupert Childane, I may explain, is a ridiculous fool, a selfish, horribly conceited, idiotic little man, who is always fancying that every girl he meets is in love with him. He is a ludicrous little knave, though not entirely untrue to life, for I believe there are such people in the world, though I have never met any. Certainly I could not remember any one at Beardingham who resembled the picture. Yet stop! By Jove, I have it! Of course, there were those two sons of old Ellis Dee, the banker. They were always up at "Brankmere" playing tennis, and in some respects might have served Miss Hatherly as models. She might have taken hints from one, or both, of them.

"At Beardingham!" said the voice at this juncture. "Well, no, I cannot say that I've ever been there. But," with an accent of triumph, "I've been at Norwich——"

"Goodness, ma," broke in the sharp little voice, "what has Norwich got to do with it? I want to hear about Rupert. He didn't seem like a country type of man to me, Maud."

"He wasn't a country type," replied Miss Hatherly, somewhat wearily, I fancied. "I think he came from London."

"From London!" echoed the voice. "Dear me, that's very odd. Lottie, I wonder if your father knows him?"

"I don't expect he does," said Miss Hatherly; "he was quite a young man. I think it was my good genius sent him down to Beardingham. I was staying with a school friend there, and the gentleman in question came frequently to the

house. He arrived very opportunely, too, for I'd just started my book, and I didn't know where to find the sort of man I wanted Childane to be. But the very moment I met my model for the first time I thought, 'that's the very man.' And so he was, only ever so much better than I expected. He used to talk to me just as I've tried to make him do in the book, until it was all I could do to keep from laughing outright. Oh, dear, if you'd only heard him. And I'm afraid I used to encourage him! He was such a splendid character study, and so exactly like the thing I wanted that I could not refrain from drawing him out, just to see how far he would go. I think in the end he went too far; at least, I got quite angry with him, I remember, the last time I saw him, but luckily the others, who had been playing tennis, came up before I had time to say anything."

Could I believe my ears? A London man, not a Beardingham one!—tennis!—the last time she saw—— Why, good Heavens! the girl was actually talking of—me!

"I wonder if we ever have met him," said the voice, not nearly satisfied yet. "What was his name?"

"His name?—oh, Legion," responded Miss Hatherly, and I drew a long breath.

"Oh, I know; but what's his other one?"

"Well, it wouldn't be quite fair to say, would it? But in any case, I have forgotten it."

"Forgotten it, Maud," grumbled the voice; "and yet you remember so well all he said and did!"

"Oh, one remembers the antics of the monkeys at the Zoo, but one doesn't bother one's head about the correct classification of the various species."

This was too much! I would rush in, confront her, and overwhelm her with my scorn! That she should wantonly have played with my tenderest feelings for weeks was little, but that she should have set herself deliberately to caricature me, to misrepresent my words and actions, and gibbet me before the world—that was insupportable! To think that even in her own mind she had dared to associate me with a contemptible little sneak like Childane. And then to pretend to forget my very name, and excuse herself by comparing me to the monkeys at the Zoo. Oh, indeed, indeed it was too much!

I had moved forward a step or two



to meet her face to face, when some nobler instinct bade me pause. After all, shockingly as she had treated me, I had once loved this girl—unworthy of it as she had proved, I had once loved her. Something was surely due to the memory of that past love. I could not lower myself in my own estimation by wrangling fiercely with one I had once adored, and I must own that I was still loth to cause her pain. I must have loved her more than I thought, for the old feeling was not dead yet. What a dreadful blow to her it would be to know that I had discovered her treachery! How terribly it would pain her to meet me after the wrong she had done me! Even if I uttered no reproach, her conscience would cry out against her every time her eye met mine. Could I inflict such a punishment on her? No! I would forego my revenge. Nay, I would even hasten away from Interlaken by the first train in the morning, spending the time till then shut up in my room in order to avoid all possibility of an accidental meeting. Such is the power of true love!

My feelings are too much for me, and I can write no more. Suffice it to say that I succeeded in leaving Interlaken without looking on the face of my false love. And I am compelled to add the fervent wish—alas, that it should be my fate to utter such a wish and utter it sincerely!—that we may never meet again.

#### NORWEGIAN FOLK-LORE.

STRANGE and unexpected are the sources of folk-lore. The ardent collector spreads his net in all waters, and often lands but little where most was hoped for. The lonely village, the isolated cottage, the cluster of huts that deface the ruins of some old abbey, would appear likely spots to gather up the lingering legends of bygone days; but unimaginative commonplace is apt to disappoint the curious seeker after superstition by the dull response: "Oh, we take no notice of such nonsense; we have no time for old wives' fables here." And the higher education is rapidly making even country children ashamed of the folk-lore of their forefathers.

"In my young days," said an old woman of ninety, whose home was in the romantic-looking village of Beaulieu, "every cross-road had its ghost, and so had every dark corner in the Abbey ruins; but the young folk have too much book-

learning to believe in them now." Still, ere they are quite forgotten, a few tales can yet be taken down from aged lips here and there, and how far preferable they are to the cut-and-dry catalogues preserved in print, only those who have heard them in the vernacular can say.

The present collector has been successful in amassing an extensive and peculiar assortment of legends from peasants in all parts of the kingdom, but never found any one person in possession of so many startling and quaint survivals of mediæval superstitions as was a certain neat and finished young housemaid, whose home was in Rutlandshire, and whose situation was in an uninspiring Bayswater flat.

The last "find" of any novelty was made in the unpromising regions of the coal-cellar. A good-tempered and variously talented young Norwegian, who had given up the sea for a small coal business, and mastered enough of English to express himself clearly, if somewhat scripturally, was the teller of the tales here recorded, tales which are eloquent of the keen Northern air, the dark and lonely Northern winter, and the somewhat austere and puritanic spirit of the Northmen.

The woods, he says, are haunted by strange and terrifying shapes even by day. A horse with a flaming head rushed last year across the path of a young man who was carrying brandy against his will to a relation. The creature pawed the ground, and rolled its blazing eyes on the wretched man, till, dropping the brandy and falling on his knees, he vowed never again to carry "the evil thing," when the monster left him, more dead than alive, to crawl to his lonely home and tell what he had seen. "Ah, thou hast seen it, then?" said the old grandmother. "Many a one has never spoken more in this world who met the horse of the fiery head."

This horse is not unknown in other lands. On the bleak Ulster bogs he rides at dawn; in some of the grey fields by the sea he may be seen rolling in agony; and there are places where, unseen by men, he is plainly visible to the eyes of the frightened horses, whom no amount of punishment will induce to pass the dreaded spot. "A condemned soul," is the simple explanation of the Ulster spaywife; how the Norwegians account for the same apparition is not known.

The black dog of vast size and ferocious aspect who figures so often in Irish folk-

lore as a death-warning, is often to be seen in the Norwegian pine-woods. In Ireland, like the Banshee, he is attached to families, and appears at intervals; in Norway he is merely a common object of the country who frightens children into fits, and leaves young girls fainting with fear, while men who try to follow him find that he vanishes close to some dangerous spot, which they barely escape. Stout-hearted indeed must the Norwegian wayfarer be, even in the open, for here again the fiery horse will gallop ahead of him in lonely roads, and the spirits of the streams try to trick him into the water by the way.

And terrors attend even the harmless duties of the farmer. Curses may be laid on his cattle, and they pine and dwindle; curses on his house, and it knows no luck; or curses on himself, and diseases and accidents are his portion. It is hard to picture what the fate of the poor curse-ridden peasant proprietor would be, were it not that there are in every locality "wise women," who—like the white witches of Norfolk—are skilled in the mysterious arts by which the spells of unfriendly spirits can be rendered harmless. To these powerful neighbours the victims of misfortune betake themselves, and learn of them how to foil their ill-wisher's schemes. A man who has been robbed has but to consult one of these wise women, and the thief will infallibly be discovered. She has but to draw from her well a glass of pure clear water, and, on looking fixedly into it, the man who has been robbed will plainly see the face and form of the robber so distinctly that no doubt can remain as to the guilty person.

Men as well as women have this inherited power of detecting evil-doers. A man in a lonely country place had but one neighbour, who regarded him as malevolently as Hudden and Dudden, in the Celtic fairy tale, regarded poor Tim O'Leary. And, as in that tale, it was on the cows that his envy and malice were wreaked.

The milk of twelve fine cows suddenly dried up, and the poor man whose sole wealth they were could not obtain a single drop. To crown his misfortunes the favourite cow, which was the most valuable of all, fell dangerously ill, and, in despair, the owner betook himself to the distant parish where "a very wise man" lived, and told his tale.

"They have been laid under a curse by some ill-minded person," was the prompt

reply. "Bring me a gun and let us set off for your farm."

Arrived there the wise man went to where the favourite cow lay in agony, had her propped up, and aimed steadily over her head and fired between her horns. "There," said he when the smoke had cleared away, "the enemy is shot, and the curse is off." And that evening each one of those bewitched cows gave her usual quantity of milk, and—strange coincidence—news was brought to the farmer that his neighbour "of the begrudging heart" was sorely wounded and lamed for life.

These wise folks are great also at the cure of diseases, and even attempt the difficult task of restoring reason to the insane.

"My cousin," says my Norwegian friend, "was raving mad for seven long years, and his father and mother would have given their lives to get him cured. After trying spells and charms of every sort they heard of a wise man in a far village who had great skill in that way, and they begged of him to come and cure their son, for he was their only one and they were bound up in him. At last the wise man came and looked at the lad.

"There is hope," said he, and he took the father with him into the field, strictly charging the mother not to open the door while they were away, come who might. In the field the wise man made a great fire, and taking a steel knife waved the blade rapidly about in the air, making certain signs with it; but the fire, which was low at first, suddenly sprang up and flamed in his face as he bent over it.

"Now that is your wife's fault," said the wise man indignantly. 'Her son must go uncured, and all because she has opened the door for some one. Let us go back.' So they returned from the field, and asked the mother why she had disobeyed the strict orders that were given.

"I could not help it, indeed," she said; 'a very poor woman came a-begging.'

"Very well," said the wise man, 'as it was for charity's sake you broke the spell, we will try again.' They went to the field, made the fire up again, and finished all the signs with the steel knife. They had left the son a raving lunatic, and on their return they found him by the fireside sitting quietly eating his food, sane and well, and no return of his lunacy has since disturbed that home."

The ill results that follow the opening of a shut door are a familiar feature of the folk-lore of many lands.

Fire appears again as a cure in another case, where a child, afflicted with some skin complaint, was cured by the mother taking a shovelful of live coals from the fire, and walking three times round the boy as the sun was setting, then opening the door of the house and flinging the embers as far to the westward as possible.

This happened to my informant in infancy, and from his account one might gather that the services of a doctor were but little needed in the lonely farm by the fiord where his home was. His father, walking home late from work on an upland field, trod in the dark on some evil and unknown thing, soft as a pillow, but of most deadly power, for his foot swelled to an enormous size, and the fever ran all over his body. The local wise man, however, was equal to the emergency. "Get three stones," said he. "One that has been long lying under some flowing brook, one that has lain long in darkness under ground, and one that has been undisturbed for a length of days on the surface of the earth. Boil them all for seven hours, and then bring them to me." The three stones were sought and found, and when well boiled were taken to the sage, when he held them to his ear. "That one," said he, laying down the first, "is the stone the brook ran over; that one is the stone that lay long under the ground; but this one is the stone that lay in the light and air. Listen well, and you will hear the sounds inside it." But the ear of the anxious wife was dull of hearing though her faith was great, and to her the healing stone was mute. "It does not matter," said the wise man. "It is given to but few to see the unseen, and to hear the inner voice of things; but take the stone, boil it again for one quarter of an hour, let your husband drink of the water it was boiled in, and the cure will be perfect."

And so it was.

The simple faith of the Norwegian peasants is that the seeing or not seeing of beings of the other world is a mere question of strong or weak nerves. Only, reversing the generally accepted belief, it is the Northman of strong nerves who has power to see the unseen. And he who sees it fears it not. "If you have the gift," says my informant, "you may see dozens and scores of forms pass your door, but you know not what it is to feel alarm."

"There's a ghost on every ship," says

the same authority. "My own uncle, who saw the unseen plain from his childhood, was married to a woman who could not believe in spirits. He had a fishing-smack of his own, and saw strange things of nights. One night he asked her to go out with him, and she went. 'If I see anything I will call for you,' he said, and she agreed to it. In the dark middle of the night he could see three men come walking on the waters towards the little vessel. He went and called his wife, saying:

"Look out now; do you see nothing?"

"No," said the wife. "I see nothing but the water and the darkness."

"Well," said he, "there are three men there, plain to be seen, and now I'll go and get up the nets, for a storm is surely coming."

"Two o'clock was the wonted hour for getting up the nets, but wait he would not, in spite of all that his wife could say to him.

"When two o'clock came the nets of all the other fishermen were lost, and their boats nearly wrecked in a sudden great storm that rose, but my uncle was well out of it, and anchored in safety, because he could read the signs they were all blind to."

And love can give the power of second sight. A mother can follow her distant children's doings, see their dangers, and hear their cries for help. Many a time has my Norwegian friend returned from sea, all unexpected, to his mother's lonely farm, and found his bed ready, his supper warm and waiting, and has felt no wonder, for "every one surely knows that a mother's heart can travel with her son."

In Norway the "personal devil" ramps and roars through the folk-lore of the peasantry in a way that is nowadays unknown in other lands. He is busy in divers forms; he is a very present possibility, a commonplace of the haunted wood to the tempted heart. The fear of him and the dread of him give a grim earnestness to the wrestlings with sin and the feelings from temptation which play so important a part in the daily life and conversation of the serious son of the North. In the form of a great dog he bars the path of the backslider with the growl, "I have you at last." As a simple countryman he tempts the listener with tales of buried and forgotten treasure which may be had for the taking, and at times he allures and repels like the terrible demon of the Scotch ballad "The Ship o' the

Fiend," or takes the form of a fascinating lost soul. My last story shows us the enemy of man in an aspect that gives one a sense of shuddering horror like some of the mediæval legends.

"Not many miles from my own home," says my Norwegian friend—and strange the tale sounds from the lips of so practical and shrewd a person—"there stands a fine old house in a wood where lived a lady and gentleman who were bad and worldly, but were very great people in the sight of men. To their door one day came the most beautiful carriage they had ever seen, and in it sat a gentleman, very handsome, and like a courtier in manner, most splendidly dressed, who begged them to step into his carriage and go with him to a magnificent dance which was to be given at an old castle some miles away. The lady, who loved dancing with all her soul, only stopped to bid her maid bring all her jewels with her, and as the splendid gentleman was in haste, she put them on in the carriage as they drove along, her maid fastening them on her neck and in her beautiful hair, and feeling very proud of the figure her mistress made in them, for she was devoted to the lady and saw no sin in her worldly pleasures.

"When they reached the castle the ball had begun, and many handsome women were there, but all turned to look at the lady from far away, for she dazzled their eyes. All wanted to dance with her, for she seemed to float on air, but none of them dared to do so, for the splendid gentleman would not suffer any one else to come near her. She longed to begin, and told the maid to stand near her, behind the hangings, so that she could call upon her if she needed her." The maid never took away her eyes from the lady's face, for her beauty seemed fated that night, and she looked like one under a spell. At last the strange man came up and seemed to compel her to dance with him instead of asking it as a favour. The lady looked alarmed, and turning to the maid she hurriedly took off her neck her chain of precious stones, and gave it to her, saying: 'Take care of it, for I shall never want it more.'

"The maid was glad to see her return from that dance, but she did not speak or move till the stranger came again to make her go with him. This time she was loth to go, but his burning eyes compelled her to do his will, and he only gave her time to turn to the maid and hand her the ivory fan she carried and the rose from her

breast, which was fading fast, as if it was being scorched up. 'Take care of them, I shall never want them more,' she said as he dragged her off, but the maid saw that her eyes were wild with fright.

"When she returned from that dance her strength seemed spent, but she seemed not to dare to speak to the maid, who asked her to try and escape from the place. As she opened her mouth to try and answer her, the stranger once more came to drag her away. She resisted hard, and even held by the hangings till she dragged them from the wall. As he carried her off she managed to tear the pearl comb from her hair, and all her pretty hair fell on her shoulders. She threw it towards the poor, faithful maid, who could not even catch her hand, and she said in a dreadful voice: 'Take care of it, I shall never want it more.'

"As she began to spin round to the music the girl saw that her fair hair seemed on fire, and that her feet began to smoulder, while her satin shoes fell off, shrivelled by the heat. Round and round they went, and faster and faster, till the devil whirled the lady out of the room, and the maid, rushing after her, saw her vanish alive into darkness, she all burning in blue fire.

"A voice in the darkness warned the maid to turn, and neither to linger nor look back; but she loved her mistress too much to obey. As a punishment she wandered lost and helpless in that wood for nine days, and when she made her way out of it to my mother's house she could speak, it is true, but no one knew the meaning of the sounds she made, for her wits were nearly gone through the fear of what she had seen. And my mother had the tale from her when her speech came back again. And all my mother's tales are true."

## ZENOBIA: A COMMONPLACE GIRL.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER IX.

ZENOBIA never had any very clear recollection of what passed during the rest of that afternoon, till she found herself lying on the sofa in her aunt's drawing-room; listening dreamily to the subdued tones of that lady's voice as she talked incessantly to Herbert Lovell, who sat opposite to her in the glimmering firelight, looking somewhat bored, but more amused by her monotonous conversation. How he had got there, and how Mrs. Brabourne

came to be conversing with him on apparently friendly terms, the girl did not very well know; but there he was, and that fact was amply sufficient for her.

Zenobia, watching him with weary but observant eyes, was surprised to see a great change for the better in his appearance. He was shabby no longer. On the contrary, he was absolutely well-dressed; his collar was clean, and beautifully got up, and altogether he looked, if not actually up to the Slowton standard of respectability, yet very much more in conformity with the Brabourne traditions than the girl could have believed possible from her former impressions of him. He had lost his shifty look, too, to a great extent in this new air of prosperity; and Zenobia observed that her aunt, far from regarding him with severe eyes of disapproval, seemed a little in awe of him. The girl could not understand it, but then she had not been present when her father and aunt first met after the former's eighteen years' absence, nor had she heard his account of how he had prospered in the interval. That explanation would have at once enabled her to comprehend her aunt's friendly attitude.

"Yes, Herbert, we have taken every care of your daughter, and her education has been all that you could wish. She has learnt all that a young lady could reasonably be expected to know."

"And has been brought up in ignorance of her own father's name," he said drily.

Mrs. Brabourne looked slightly disconcerted for a moment.

"There were circumstances, you must allow, painful circumstances, that justified us in bringing Zenobia up in ignorance of her true parentage. My husband's brother, Martin Brabourne, died in London just after we heard the rumours of your sudden decease on the American continent, and it seemed our duty not to let slip so excellent an opportunity of securing a good and honourable name for our niece. We acted entirely in her interest."

Mr. Lovell laughed; but though his laugh was loud, it was scarcely natural.

"Upon my soul, Martha, you flatter me," he said. "Had I realised how the mere shadow of my name would blight that unhappy child's prospects of future respectability, I'd have kept out of her way now. Honour bright, I would."

"You mistake, Herbert," with dignity. "I was speaking of the past, of that miserable time when you left England under——"

"A cloud?" he suggested. "Exactly," "Peculiarly distressing circumstances," she corrected him. "But your return to-day atones for that somewhat hurried departure a hundredfold. In welcoming the American merchant prince we would wish to forget the——the——"

"Absconding English swindler? That was what you called me at the time, I remember, though, after all, I was scarcely so bad as that. But I find, Martha, you are far more liberal-minded in Slowton than you used to be. What do you know of this young tutor, for instance, to whom you have entrusted the finishing touches of my daughter's education?"

"Mr. Devondale? Oh, he is a most gentlemanlike young man! He is of good family, too, for" — and the old lady lowered her voice mysteriously — "I have reason to believe he is one of the Devon-ales of Dartmouth!"

"Oh, he is, is he? And what of that?"

"Of course, it is a recommendation to belong to a well-established family, and Mr. Priestley tells me that this young man——"

"Is an opera-singer, a gambler, and a scoundrel? If he tells you this, he tells you the truth."

"You don't say so! Zenobia, do you——"

"Hush!" emphatically. "Zenobia is asleep; don't disturb her. Yes, that's the true character of your 'most gentlemanlike young man.' How do you like it?"

"But it is shameful! abominable! An opera-singer? And he sang in my drawing-room! Oh, I never heard of such impertinence! I always thought there was something forward in his manner; something not quite——"

There was a heavy step on the landing, and Mr. Brabourne opened the door and looked with puzzled eyes at the man sitting, with so familiar an air of being very much at home, at his own fireside.

"Martha, who is this?" he asked, his formal manner stirred by unwonted agitation. "Surely it cannot be——"

"Your brother-in-law, Herbert Lovell? Yes, Brabourne, it is I," and he rose and advanced to meet him. But Mr. Brabourne looked at his brother-in-law with no very pleased expression, and without offering him his hand.

"It is Herbert, James, and he has come back quite a wealthy man. Quite a merchant prince, as I tell him. So we will let bygones be bygones, and——"

"No, Martha. When Herbert Lovell went away I refused to shake hands with him, not because he was a poor man, but because, according to my old-fashioned notions, he was a dishonest one. I'm not going to give him my hand now because his dishonest practices have prospered, and he has come back wealthy."

Mr. Brabourne spoke with evident sincerity, despite his pomposity of manner; and his brother-in-law said gravely:

"Brabourne, you're an honest man, and I hope you'll do me the justice to own before long that I'm one too, now. Make what enquiries you please, you'll find I've no reason to be ashamed of my wealth; but, in the meantime, will you take my word for it for a few hours? Martha has asked me to dine with you, and——"

"You are welcome, then. Is Zenobia better?"

"Yes; but don't disturb her. She has fallen asleep during our conversation, and had better rest."

But Zenobia was not asleep, though well pleased that they should think her so. Her father's words had brought all her troubles and doubts too vividly before her for further rest to be possible; and she was thankful when at length they went down to dinner, and she was left alone.

She sat up, and pushed back the dark, disordered hair from her forehead. Oh, if only she had not lost consciousness just at that moment; if only she had kept her wits about her a little longer; how different all might have been! Mr. Devondale might—no doubt he could—have explained his knowledge of her father quite satisfactorily, and in a way to make her ashamed of even her momentary fears; but now the opportunity for explanation was gone, and who could tell whether another would ever be granted her? Zenobia's faith had only been disturbed for a moment, not seriously shaken; yet as she listened to her aunt's sudden change of tone, and marked how readily she acquiesced in his condemnation, the poor girl felt that she, too, had doubted him on almost as slight grounds, and with a far better knowledge of his character. But this conviction of her own weakness, humiliating though it was, was powerless to help her to undo the past, or even to teach her how to make amends for it, and for the wrong that she had done him. No; she had lost the opportunity of explanation, and now——

A sound of approaching footsteps roused her. She raised her head, and listened.

Surely, Jane was not bringing anybody up here just now; when she must know she could see no one!

Was it possible—could it be——?

"Mr. Devondale to see you, miss. May he come in?"

"Yes; oh, yes!"

And he came in quickly, as Jane discreetly withdrew.

"You are better?" he said eagerly. "I couldn't wait any longer for news of you, so I came over to ask, though I hardly hoped——"

"I am glad, very glad, to see you. I was wishing it very much."

"Then I'm glad I came;" and he sat down near her, talking more quickly than usual. "The Paxtons have gone out to dinner, and Cecil and I have been bothering all the afternoon as to how you were. You've got your colour back, I can tell him, so I hope——"

"I want to ask you something."

"Don't you think we've had enough of asking questions to-day?" interrupting her hastily. "I don't fancy you ought to talk about anything that worries you just yet."

"And I know that I shall worry till I do talk about it. There are charges—things have been said—and I want to be able to deny them once for all. That is, I want you to know, that you may do it."

He looked at her as she sat there, clasping and unclasping her slender white fingers nervously, and a sudden light broke in on him.

"Things said? About whom?" he asked.

"You," she flushed painfully as she spoke. "Shameful things; but I don't believe them, indeed. Nobody could who knows you."

"Thank you;" and he took her hand and kissed it reverently, tenderly. "There is no need for you to believe them, Zenobia. Whoever says them they are false, utterly false. Will that denial satisfy you?"

"Me? 'Oh, yes! But will you tell him, too?"

"Him?" and he looked questioningly into the dark eyes raised so frankly to his with such utter trust.

"Yes; Herbert Lovell."

He started, and dropped the hand he was still holding in his.

"Herbert Lovell? Do you know him?"

"Yes; he is my father."

"Your father! Good Heavens! And that is the man whose past life has been—— I cannot discuss him with you, Zenobia; less than ever now."

The door was opened suddenly, and Herbert Lovell himself stood on the threshold.

"Sorry to interrupt you, Devondale," he said, with the sardonic laugh Zenobia knew so well; "but I cannot allow my daughter—why——" he broke off abruptly, and stared first at the young tutor and then at Zenobia.

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked hoarsely. "They told me Frank Devondale was here."

"Yes; I am he."

"You? You have his voice; but—— Zenobia, is this the Frank Devondale you have spoken of?"

"Yes," she replied. "I know no other."

"Then there's some misunderstanding. I never saw this gentleman before, and I know nothing against him. The Devondale I knew in the States——"

"Was my cousin, Mr. Lovell. I have heard your name in connection with him often," Mr. Devondale said quietly. "He was shot in some gambling row in California last year; so I trust there will be no further confusion between us."

"Shot, was he? I've no doubt he richly deserved his fate. I'm glad you're not the man I took you for, upon my soul, I am; and I'll just go down and tell the Brabournes it's all a mistake."

The door closed behind him; he went slowly downstairs, and paused for a moment in the hall.

"No, I won't tell them, I'll write," he said thoughtfully. "My visit home has been a failure, and the sooner I end it, the better."

He put on his coat, took down his

hat, and noiselessly let himself out of the house; nor did he ever enter it again.

"Oh, Mr. Devondale, can you ever forgive me?" Zenobia exclaimed impulsively, as her father left the room.

"Forgive you? For what?"

"For having doubted you even for a moment? Oh, it was terrible! But he seemed so certain, and then what I——"

"Don't talk of it any more, it's over now, and done with," he said earnestly. "And you really cared so much about it as this? Zenobia, you give me courage to speak, though I had not meant to tell you of my love for a long time yet. Oh, my darling, will you listen to me? Will you make me the happiest man in the world by owning that you do care for me a little?"

He was kneeling beside her, her hands in his, but Zenobia drew them away hastily, and started up.

"My father!" she said, blushing hotly.

"I am ashamed to——"

"The past is done with, dearest; we have only to think of the present and the future. Your father! He is your father, and as such I shall always regard him. You will not——"

"Mr. Devondale!" and Mrs. Brabourne threw open the door, and stood before them. "I find you are not a suitable person to address my niece. I must trouble you to leave the house immediately."

"You speak under a delusion, Mrs. Brabourne, which can soon be explained. For your niece, she can answer for herself. Zenobia, do you send me away, too?"

And Zenobia answered: "No."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XII.

##### THE WEARING OF THE GREEN.

THE cord—such a slender cord!—was about to be loosened; the bowl—such a little, little bowl!—was about to be broken at the fountain. . . We know that Patsey had many times and oft had "trimblements in his insoide"; had been "taken wid a kind of a wakeness"; had suffered long and sorely, had suffered in many ways; but the suffering that had come to him now had come with a difference.

We may—those of us who are keeping vigil by a sick-bed—mistake sore sickness for approaching death; we can never make any mistake when death really blows with his cold breath upon the dear white face. Even the veriest tyro in nursing will recognise the dread visitant when he really comes; and now, those who watched by Patsey's bed knew that the story of the little suffering life was nearly told.

Patsey is no phantom of my brain. I am writing what I remember, not what I fancy. It is all true about this little shrivelled atomy, with the quick intelligence of a man, the heart of an angel, and the gentleness of a dove; the child of poor Irish peasant parents, and yet a little vivid personality to be remembered through the passing of the years. Very tender is my memory of him as I weave him into the meshes of my story—a living, breathing thing amid a world of phantasy!

Another ghost too, rises, as I look into the past—a little Sassenach child with great brown eyes and golden hair, who bends over little Patsey and kisses him, patting him gently with his blessed hand and saying, "Poor! poor!" but not understanding in what Patsey's poorness consists, nor yet towards what dark portal he is drifting—he, too, is gone into the land of shadows, and the two little figures, so piteously grouped together, come to me as one unbroken memory.

It was one of those nights all shadows and soft puffing wind that smites you like a baby's palm; with dark masses of cloud scudding across a pale sky, and the hush of the star-shine beyond. With a full heart Alison had hastened down the narrow, dropping street at Tim's breathless bidding—Tim, who seemed but as one of the shadows themselves, so noiselessly did he flit from side to side, or stalk backwards in the middle of the road, the better to face the lady and tell all his little tale of woe. Then, at the door of the house they stopped, Tim falling on his ragged knees and crossing his ragged breast, for they could hear the quiet voice of the priest.

They waited a while, Alison, dutifully followed by Tim, taking a few steps onwards. She was struck with the stillness everywhere. Next to a funeral, poor folk love a death-bed; but no one seemed to be troubling about little Patsey—indeed, there seemed to be no one to trouble. Hardly a light twinkled in the low bits of windows, hardly a doorstep had an occupant.

"Where are the people gone to-night, Tim?" said Alison.

"Shure an' I'm thinkin' it's blackberryin' they are, over on the hillside," and he pointed into space generally.



"Blackberrying at this time of night! Oh, Tim!"

"It's quare ways they have hereabouts, the craythurs!" said Tim; then, seeing the dark figure of the priest passing out, pulled his shaggy forelock in lieu of doffing the cap that wasn't there.

"I could not come sooner," she said to the poor sorrowing mother; "Major Henneker is away, and his wife is ill. I had to wait until my cousin came in, to be with her; but now I shall not leave Patsey any more."

And the child's feeble voice echoed her words: "not leave Patsey any more."

Allison thought within herself that it was Patsey who would leave her, this time; and she realised how the tiny creature had twined about her heart, and how empty one little niche of her life would be when he was gone.

But she had not much time to think about herself. The Irishwoman's love for her children is a passion; even the idiot child is cherished with a tenderness touching to see, and that Patsey was not like other children had only made him the more precious. Nay, there had been a feeling in the family that there was a certain distinction in such a possession; that any one could have a whole brood of ordinary children; but that Patsey was—Patsey, and no other. Then all his little winning ways; his gentle patience, his grave eyes watching them all day long, the cuteness of him in amusing the baby when that potentate was tied securely in a small chair and set beside the box bed.

When he was gone it would seem as if music had ceased to sound. Those simple souls who loved him could not put it in those words, but that was what they felt; and now Patsey's mother, overborne by the shadow of a desolation to come, stood sorely in need of comfort.

"Is it me that's to be left behind widout ye, Patsey?" she cried, rocking herself to and fro, with all the demonstrative passion of her race; "shure an' it's the owld tree should be cut down, an' not the young sapling. Oh, my bouchal! \* my bouchal! must ye be lavin' me? An' what will I be after doin' widout ye through the long days an' the winter nights? What will I be after doin' wid no Patsey to smolle at me sweet as the angels of heaven?" Then, turning to Allison: "Take some pity, my lady, on a poor diathracid mother."

\* Boy.

"I do—I do," said Alison, a tender hand on the woman's shoulder, a pitying face bending over her, "but when you cry so loud he hears you—see, he is stirring."

"Daddy, daddy," said Patsey in a small, weary voice; and Alison looked quickly round the room, noting for the first time the father's absence—the poor father, shaggy yet loving, rough at times, yet tender at the core, as well she knew.

"Bad cess to the lot of 'em," sobbed the woman; but Tim, who had been standing on one leg in the shadow, like a stork in a garden, made a frantic gesture, and she smothered the rest of her sentence in the baby's neck.

Then the chimes fell softly from the church tower—the soft sweet chimes of Shandon—and Patsey smiled, raising his dim eyes a moment; while Alison, bending over him, heard him whisper to himself:

"Pretty bells, Patsey's dear pretty bells."

They had chimed the hour, and Tim seemed in great perturbation of spirit. He was a very restless, agitated stork now, standing first on one leg, then on the other, and finally with a sort of screwing movement of despair, casting himself down on his knees by Patsey's bed.

"Is it after going to leave me ye are, Patsey?" he cried, sobbing out the words; "will ye wait awhile, darlint, till I come back to ye? Patsey, are ye listenin' to me? Tell me now—will ye wait?"

But Patsey shook his weary head. "I can't wait for anybody," he said sadly.

The bright, smooth waves were under him; the river was hastening on to the sea.

"Well, kiss me then, darlint, for I've got to go," said Tim, weeping; and then the door opened and shut, and he was gone, a shadow among the shadows of the night.

"Is he gone to fetch your husband? Does he know where he is?" said Alison, for that little cry of "Daddy" lingered in her mind, and she had the natural shrinking which we all have from the idea of the dying being denied anything they crave for.

"The holy saints preserve us this night," replied the woman, "bad cess to them as—"

But she got no further.

One of those cruel spasms of pain took Patsey, crumpling him up as though a tangible hand had grasped him. He fought the air with his stiffened fingers, crying out yet seeming to strangle as he cried.

In a moment Alison had her arm underneath him, and his head held firm against her breast. It is, perhaps, one of the lessons of bitter suffering that it makes us brave for always.

It seemed strange indeed that such a feeble little life as Patsey's should take so much undoing. One would have thought that such a tiny flame would have flickered and gone out so easily; but after living hard—very hard indeed, it may be said—it was destined that Patsey should die hard, too. With the same gentle endurance with which he had met the one he met the other, evidently looking upon it as a struggle that had to be got through, a fight that had to be fought, and sadly resigning himself to the inevitable. Besides, it was evident that he felt surrounded by things that called for gratitude on his part, and this helped him. Some soft ripe fruit with which his dear lady moistened his parched mouth, some rose-red wine that seemed to ease the aching and dryness in his throat, some beautiful scent with which she bathed his brow, and then the soft swirl of a great feather fan, that made breathing a far more easy thing than it had been these two days past—all these things were wonderful and beautiful to Patsey, and in his intervals of quiet and freedom from pain he took in all their delight. Besides, she had come to see him very, very often; oh, far more times than Patsey could count even on both fingers, and beginning all over again when you'd got through the first time. But she had never come like this, almost as if she lived there, and Patsey belonged to her altogether.

Wasn't that her little grey bonnet lying there on the chair which had only three legs, and had to be propped against the wall, where a bit of wood stuck out "all convenient," and kept it up properly; and there was her cloak hanging on a nail by the window. Dying was hard work, thought Patsey, but it had its compensations. The red glow from the brooding peat fire, and the small flare of a guttering candle on the window-ledge showed the glint of Alison's brown, piled-up hair, and the shimmer of a locket at her throat—shone in her tender, pitiful eyes, and made a pink sparkle in the glass of red wine that stood near the candle. As the shadows trembled and changed in the corners, and the child's white, patient face showed palely in their midst, what a study for an artist would that poor room have made!

That which in the garish day would

only have been commonplace, in the shadowy night turned to beauty which held a suggestion of holiness, and the nearness of the world that is "elsewhere," yet evermore around us and about us.

As the night wore on Alison noticed that the attacks of pain came at longer intervals, leaving, however, the little sufferer more exhausted every time. Slowly but surely Patsey was nearing the dark sea; yet he had a faint, far-off smile for her now and again, and had twisted the bony fingers of his right hand into a filmy fringe that depended from her gown, as if to make sure by touch, as well as by sight, that she was not going to slip away from his side and vanish, as she had so often done before.

Baby had gone to sleep along with the hen and chickens in the little inner room. Everything was very silent, though the little window was now set back to give Patsey air, and the two pigeons who lived in a box outside under the thatch, presents from Norah, were troubled with uneasy dreams, and coo-rooed in their sleep. Still, that was a comfortable, hushing sound, and together with the soft sough of the westerly breeze gently stirring the bushes, made more of a lullaby than anything else.

Every now and then Patsey turned a wistful look to the door, and at last Alison said softly to the mother:

"Your husband is very late to-night, is he not?"

"He's often that," replied the woman, turning her head aside.

"And Norah; has she seen Patsey?"

"Shure she was here to-day, an' the tears stramin' down her face like rain-drops on the pane. But it's in sad throuble she is herself, for her mother's terrible bad—an' there's some other sorer over her; but it's a silent sorer, an' one she won't spake of. Ses she to me, 'Me heart's riven in twain,' ses she, an' in her eyes was a terrible look o' fear, same as Mike O'Sullivan's when the polis was huntin' him, an' he came in through the back way on all-fours like a hunted baste, an' 'For God's sake in heaven,' ses he, 'hide me up.'"

Then in a moment the woman was down on her knees, her talk cut in two with the pain of seeing Patsey suffer.

She started, and shook, and prayed as she watched Alison tend him, and then, as the paroxysm passed, leaving him like some frail thing from which an evil spirit

has been cast out, her grateful heart found vent in sobbing words.

"It's you that have the brave heart that knows no fear, an' me, the boy's own mother, goin' near to lose me sinces at the sight of him wid his blessed eyes struck blind, an' his blessed hands fightin' the air. Oh, the Lord love you an' comfort you, miss, in your own day o' sorrer!"

If she had only known, poor simple soul, in what bitter school that noble calmness of courage had been learned! If she had only known what a terrible harvest of pain had gone to bring forth that aftermath of helplessness!

It is hard sometimes to realise the use of sorrow and suffering in this world of ours, but there are moments when we see the beauty and the need of both.

After each bout of pain Patsey looked at the small world around him from somewhere a little further off.

The river was hastening—hastening on to the sea; but the child's straining eyes could always see his dear lady's face, and he could feel the touch of her gentle hand upon his brow.

"Dear," she said, laying her hand on the woman's shoulder, "he will not be with you long now."

Alison knew the signs: the thin, almost transparent nostril distended with each laboured breath, the little catching sob that came now and again. So the mother, striving with a noble courage to possess her soul in patience, drew nearer to the little box-bed, and the two women watched in the stillness, one on either side, until the sweet bell-voices fell trembling and vibrating into the valley, telling out the hour of eleven. Hardly, however, had the last note sounded, lingered, and trembling, died, than the silence that followed was rent by a long, pitiful, wailing cry.

"The blessed saints have mercy on us this night," cried Patsey's mother, "it's the child's warning—it's the Banshee—the Banshee! What will I be after doin' wid meself—whativer will I do?"

Even while she spoke, the piteous cry came again, close against the door this time, and Alison would have crossed the room, but the frightened woman held her by the gown.

"Nay; but I must see what it is," she said firmly, and so opened the crazy door, that creaked mightily upon its hinges, when in walked, or rather bounded, Phelim.

"Ah, Phalim now, ye low-born craythur," cried Patsey's mother, full of indignation, "what for are ye after lettin' on to be a banshee that way? Be whisht now, can't ye?"

But Phelim took no heed. He went straight to the bed, laid his ugly old head on the coverlet, and gazed into poor Patsey's face with eyes almost human in sympathy and understanding.

So three watched on, instead of two; and the wind and the p'geons had it all their own way again, the while the river hastened to the sea, and Patsey, floating on the silver ripples, got everything around him all confused in his dazed brain, so that his dear lady was his mother, and his mother spoke in Alison's voice, and Phelim seemed to be a ghost-dog ever so far away, yet always with fond and faithful eyes, and a loving tongue that touched his fingers every now and then timidly.

"Surely," said Alison, turning her head quickly towards the window, "there is the sound of singing somewhere. What can it be at such an hour as this?"

"Maybe 'tis the little boneens squealing in the 'tater patch," said Patsey's mother, pulling the shawl she had thrown about her head lower over her eyes.

"There is another sound, too—it is like the rushing of water."

"'Tis the wind rising for midnight, an' keenin' through the slantin' trees."

"No, no, no," said Alison, rising to her feet, and growing white as milk, "no, it is not the wind, it is the tramp of feet; and I have heard that song before. I ought not to be here. I must go. Oh! why did you not tell me?" And more and more like the rushing of many waters grew the gathering sound, and louder and louder the swinging rebel song.

Phelim heard it, and all his sparse hair stood erect, as with his one ear pricked up he made for the door, whining and scratching with his feet.

No sooner was the door open than he was off like an arrow from a bow, and the two women—the Sassenach and the Celt—were left looking at each other.

One tiny tug at Alison's gown, and she felt as if a strong arm had clutched her, and pulled her back.

In spite of all the Moonlighters, and all the rebel songs that were ever sung, she would not leave little Patsey until the river had borne him to the sea out of sight and ken.

Scarcely had she knelt close to him to reassure him, when the whole room was lit up with the flicker and glow of a hundred torches; black shadows chased each other wildly on the walls, and a perfect sea of sound swept by the cabin; the tread of countless feet, the song of countless voices:

Oh, sad the day and dark the hour for Erin's faithful sons,  
When tyrant laws are framed and passed the light of freedom shuns;  
No man, we're told, must e'en be bold, his colour ne'er be seen,  
With mighty frown the law puts down the Wearing of the Green.  
Well, let the powers do what they will, there's things they cannot do:  
They cannot chain the spirit down nor prove that false is true.  
So we'll bide our time, our banner yet and motto shall be seen,  
And voices shout the chorus—the Wearing of the Green.

It was almost as if the little house was struck by the force of some raging storm. Patsey's mother broke out weeping. Alison bowed her head upon her hands, and would fain have stopped her ears with her fingers. She knew now where "Daddy" was, and why Patsey had to call in vain; she knew where Tim had fled to, and why the streets had seemed so still and silent when first she came down the valley.

The flaring flame of the torches had shown her something else, too. She saw that Patsey was looking up into her face with that strange, fixed gaze which means the parting of body and soul is nigh at hand. The rush of sound was dying away as the massed rabble passed down the street, and on Patsey's face was the look of one who listens in a wondering, dreamy joy.

Again came the swing and swell of the refrain:

So we'll bide our time, our banner yet and motto shall be seen,  
And voices shout the chorus—the Wearing of the Green.

The child put his little arm about her neck.

"Hush!" he said, "it's the angels singing."

Then came a long, quivering sigh, and Alison thought all was over, but the pale lips moved again:

"Tell Tim—I—couldn't wait."

The river had reached the bright and boundless sea: the little, suffering life was ended.

Alison could not leave the poor sorrow-

ing mother for a while. Between them they laid the little frail body, which was all that was left of poor wee Patsey, in a seemly attitude of rest, with the tiny hands crossed upon the stirless breast, surely the best way of all to lay our dead for their last sleep. "Here am I, for Thou didst call me," seem those meek and folded hands to say. Then the golden curls had to be brushed all smooth and glossy, and the dim eyes closed. Surely never was a sweeter image of death seen than Patsey lying in his little bed, with the glow of the peat fire touching his marble face.

Alison comforted the mother as best she could; but what is our best at such times? Have we not all felt the hollowness of words, the helplessness of sympathy?

Alison turned at the door for one long, last look; the little waxen figure in the corner, the kneeling figure by its side, the red glow touching both.

Now she has closed the door and is out in the windy street. The soft breeze buffets her, the pale stars are overhead, shining between the ragged edges of the drifting clouds. And still she can hear the far-off sounds of many feet, and strange, inarticulate cries.

But is it really so very far off? Is it not rather coming nearer and nearer? And this time surely it is no rebel song she hears, but the awful clash of that dread music to which we who have once "taken the shilling" have so often heard our dead carried home.

Louder and louder grows the solemn dirge, nearer and nearer the tramp of a thousand feet. The clash and blare of brazen-throated trumpets make the still night throb and thrill; the low, trembling roll of the drums seems the moan of riven hearts that weep.

In her present state of tension and exaltation, it seems to Alison that the Dead March plays for little Patsey. She has forgotten how long she has fasted; how terribly the scene of the last few hours has tried her nerves; she is as one who had long since reached that stage of discipline in which it is possible wholly to forget one's own individuality; but that sort of thing has its limits, and Alison has now reached the barrier.

The crowd grows denser every moment, for the two monster gatherings have coalesced, and now form one mighty concourse. The sea of faces are lit up into unearthly pallor by the glare of the tar-

barrels on the hills, and the flicker of the torches that wave high in air. The girl is tossed hither and thither like a leaf upon a turgid stream. No open insult is offered to her—insult to a woman in the coarsest sense is quite unknown to an Irish crowd—and she is not afraid, only overwrought, and more than once in real danger of being crushed against the low stone walls that in places edge the road, or against the houses that all stand stark and dark since no man, woman, or child remains in them. Truth to say, for some time none of the crowd recognise Alison as being any different from one of themselves; they are too intent upon what they are doing. But the pressure grows, a path is being forcibly opened down the centre; here and there a woman cries out, or holds up a little child high above the heads of the people for safety; the torches sway and sputter—and now—

O Heavens! what is this ghastly burden borne on men's shoulders—borne by men who step in time to the awful death-wail!

A coffin, draped in black. Another—yet another. They follow on in gruesome file—six altogether—and as they pass, men uncover, as if to the dead, and women keen and cry.

Alison's thoughts throw back to the awful hour when she saw her dearest borne away in like manner. The shriek of the fifes, the roll of the drums are in her ears. She bends her head, and puts her hand to her throat. She seemed to be strangling, and would give the world to scream. But she has a fine contempt for the hysteria fiend, and fights him off bravely.

When the coffins have passed, the crowd behind surges like the sea. A woman stares into Alison's face, and then shakes her fist in it. Three or four more seem to gather round, and there is a babel of tongues that conveys no meaning to her dazed senses.

At that moment she catches sight of the haggard, staring face of Patsey's father, with Tim dancing like a young demon beside him. If only they would turn and look at her! But they are drunk with fanaticism. They do not see her; they pass on.

The horrible death march is softened now by distance; it walls on the wind like a banshee, but does not rend and tear you with its deafening shriek and roll. Soon, perhaps, the crowd will grow less dense; she will be able to make her way.

She can fancy how quiet they all are at home—the Major away, the house-mother asleep; little Missy, all her golden hair astray upon her pillow, and the sweet flush of sleep upon her cheek, and Elsie—dear loving Elsie, quite happy and at rest, because Alison had said:

"If I am not home by ten, you will know that I am staying all night with Patsey."

She had never thought of such a terrible thing as this happening, and yet she had to come, late as it was.

Patsey's father would have come home, and Heaven only knew what manner of men with him—men wild with mutiny, and drunk with treason.

It could have been no place for her—the daughter of a Queen's soldier.

That thought reminded her of the regiment. What would she not have given for the gleam of a scarlet coat, and the sight of a cap with the magic number one hundred and ninety-three?

But, she remembered, the men were confined to barracks, all save the pickets and one or two men specially told off to keep a watch on runaways.

She must dree her weid as best she could; and she was no coward, this slim girl with the grave eyes, and sad, sweet mouth.

She would have thought that amid such a crowd as that now gathered together from every part of the city of Cork, unanimity would have prevailed; but the Irish temperament must be allowed for. Some vivid spirits were not only ready to fight the Sassenachs, and revenge the "murder" of the Manchester Martyrs, but were also ready and willing to fight each other, and straightway set to work to do so.

It seemed to Alison as if she herself were in the thick of the battle, though, as a matter of fact, she was only on the fringe of it; but the density and clamour of an Irish fight was, to her, an unknown quantity.

She managed to creep to the side of the road, and find some slight refuge in the shallow arch of a doorway. Three or four struggling together with unspeakable yells and howlings, staggered against her, and, all at once, the door against which she was leaning gave; she fell into a dark passage, trying to cling to the wall, but in vain. Then—what then?

A tall figure in a long dark coat filled the pale gap made by the open door;

she sees a tiny gleam of scarlet—sees one man fly this way—another that—and hears a voice cry as in extremity:

“For Heaven’s sake, madam, give me your hand,” and she knows even in the darkness and confusion that it is Colour-Sergeant number one company who speaks.

### SOME OLD JAMAICAN CHURCHES.

OUTSIDE—sunshine blazing from a cloudless sky, casting cool, black shadows, and drawing the breath from the earth in the shape of a shimmering haze; giant trees, of strange form and unfamiliar foliage, grouped about graves of red brick decayed and dilapidated, not from age and neglect, but from heat and drought; the cabbage palm, with its clean, smooth pillar-like trunk; the graceful water palm, known also as the Traveller’s Joy, for the stalk of every leaf holds a mouthful of water; the tamarind, the mango, the bread-fruit; here a clump of blood-red Poinsettia, there a mass of purple Bougainvillea; all speaking, by their richness and thickness and vigorous growth, far more eloquently than by many words, of the boundless wealth of Nature in these latitudes.

Inside—one step out of the glare and heat, Old England, as reproduced in an old Jamaican church, the illusion being dispelled when we catch a glimpse through the unglazed, heavily jalousied windows, of palm-branches floating against such a blue sky as never was seen through English church window.

Here the hand of the restorer and moderniser has never wrought. Here is no sheen of fresh varnish, no glitter of polished brasswork, no glare of tessellated pavement, no rainbow effect of vividly tinted altar-cloth or chancel hanging. At home, this old Jamaican church would probably be considered dilapidated, and immediate steps for reparation would be taken. Its best likeness is to be found in the heart of the City of London, and even there it must be industriously sought for. Yet more than four thousand miles of ocean separate us here from London City and its quaint, sombre, ghostly, silent old churches, a fact we are reminded of by the presence of the slipshod, white-turbaned old black woman who is paddling about the pews barefooted, dusting and arranging cushions and prayer-books with half an eye on us in the regular West Indian negro fashion.

Everything around us belongs to a bygone age, and, let it be noted, to an age which, although recent if measured by our home standard of antiquity, is brimful of romance and rich in food for reflection.

The love and reverence which made our ancestors at home deck and beautify their places of worship is apparent here. The scions of good old English and Scottish families who came to the West Indies to make fortunes, remained in the West Indies to spend them; and, as they lived in royal, prodigal style, so were they careful that posterity should have substantial reasons for not forgetting them after their deaths. Just as the hand of the Briton is manifest in the sturdy red-brick houses and their pleasaunces which dot the West Indian Islands; just as the Londoner fondly memorialised his grand old city in the names of West Indian streets, and squares, and lanes; just as the Scotsman named West Indian counties, and mountains, and rivers, and towns after counties, and mountains, and rivers, and towns in his beloved homeland, so did all combine to reproduce across the wide sea the sacred fane linked by association with the days of earliest childhood.

Look, for instance, at the old organ-loft of Port Royal Church, which juts far out into the body of the church, an enormous structure of time-stained oak, carved in old fashion with cherubs’ heads and festoons of flowers and foliage, supported upon sturdy pillars. You may read on the front panel in tarnished gilt letters how it was erected by the direction of John Woodruff and William Chisholm, church-wardens, in the year 1743.

Look at the massive, curious brass candelabrum suspended from the ceiling in the entrance porch of Kingston Parish Church. It is dusty and tarnished enough now, for our church is lighted by electricity, and many years have elapsed since candles twinkled in the score or so of sconces which branch out from the pendent brass; but the inscription upon it is plain enough, which sets forth that it was the gift of William O. Burne, “Marchant,” Anno Domini 1728, to the Parish of Kingston, Jamaica.

The silver alms-dish handed round is dated 1707, and was the gift of an old planter, whilst the massive Communion plate goes back to the days of Dutch William. Everything else is in harmony. No new-fangled reredos, gorgeous with carving and mosaic and æsthetic colouring,

is here, but in its place the good old oaken background with the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer inscribed thereon with innumerable flourishes, enclosed with gilt carving, and surmounted by the Royal Arms. No little auctioneer's rostrum of a pulpit or reading-desk, no glittering brass lectern are here, but a regular three-decker construction with a sounding-board, and brass candlesticks, and cushioned book-supports, and—no, not an hour-glass now, but there was one within the memory of men.

Close under the pulpit is the Governor's pew, high-backed, with a red satin curtain round it; and there is Mr. Mayor's pew, and the pew for Messieurs the members of the Corporation. Dear me! If that old red-turbaned negress would only get out of sight we might be ruminating in All Hallows, Barking, or St. Olave's, Hart Street!

Even more interesting are the memorials.

The merchant of to-day often regards his West Indian home as a mere accessory to his bread-and-butter-making machinery—fortunes are not made now in the West Indies, sometimes but little butter to the bread—very likely he spends six months of every year in the old country. At any rate he hopes to die at home, and if that cannot be managed he will be buried in the new-model cemetery outside the town, and not under the stones of his West Indian church.

But the old West Indian gentlemen of the days when the home voyage was as great an undertaking as is a voyage to the North Pole now, lived and died where they made their money, just as lived and died the old London citizens, and were buried in the parish church or outside it, just as were buried the old London citizens; and so even more interesting than organ-loft, or chancel, or three-decker pulpit, or high, cushioned pews, are their memorials. No mere flimsy, temporary affairs are these memorials, be it understood, but good, sturdy, all-enduring inscriptions and embellishments deeply cut and graven on slate and stone, or printed boldly and unmistakeably on imperishable marble.

As we read these a mental picture gallery is presented to us, and vividly illustrated pages of the book of the past are unfolded, by the aid of which we almost seem to be able to see and hear the actors and actresses on a stage which has disappeared for ever, and which can never be revived in its old glory.

Battle, murder, and sudden death seemingly worked havoc in the old days; but far above them in proportion towers the holocaust of victims to the climate—or, to be fair and exact, to fever. It is impossible to help remarking how often on these West Indian church monuments the three words "of yellow fever" follow the word "died"; how ruthlessly death swept the ranks of the young and the mature; how rarely we find attainment to a ripe old age. And, remarking these things, how we ought to thank Heaven that times are changed, and that nowadays a man need no more dread going to the West Indies on account of yellow fever than going to England on account of contracting consumption!

Thoroughly old-fashioned and entirely in harmony with old country traditions is the universal ascription of virtuous qualities. He who, sauntering through a London City church, has smiled at the mass of integrity, affection, virtue, kindliness, and honour recorded about him, may smile again in our West Indian church as his eyes review the memorialised regiments of good fathers, and loving husbands, and devoted wives, and affectionate children, and conscientious Governors, and public-spirited merchants, and military and naval Officers, especially if a few paragraphs of "Tom Cringle" came to his memory, and he thinks of the lives led by the West Indians, and of the jobbery and corruption which saturated our military and naval administration in the old days.

Let us, however, look at a few of the most noticeable memorials. Move this choir bench and read what is graven on the slate slab beneath it:

"Here lyeth interred the body of John Benbow Esquire, Admiral of the White, a true pattern of English courage who lost his life in defence of his Queens and Country, November ye fourth 1702, in the 52<sup>d</sup> year of his age by a wound in his legg received in an engagement with Monsieur Du Casse, being much lamented."

How can we help reflecting that in our National Pantheon at Westminster many an obscure nonentity lies under a magnificent monument, and that this poor slate slab, half hidden from sight and daily trodden under foot, should be deemed good enough for the fine old sea-dog who, deserted by his captains and sorely wounded, upheld the honour of his flag on this distant sea?

Read the moral conveyed by the epitaph

in this same church on Edward Tettle, who died in 1742:

Farewell, vain world  
I've had enough of thee  
I am now grown careless,  
Of what thou said to me.

Your smiles I'll court not,  
Your frowns I do not fear.  
My days are past,  
My head lies quiet here.

What faults you saw in me take care to shun,  
And look at home,—there's enough to be done.

An epitaph in Spanish Town Cathedral is historically interesting:

"Here lyeth ye bodye of Colbeck of Colbeck who was born ye 30 of May 1630 and came with ye army that conquered this island (Jamaica) ye 10<sup>th</sup> day of May 1655, where, having discharged severall Hon<sup>ble</sup> offices both civil and military with great applause, he departed this life ye 22<sup>d</sup> day of February 1682."

By many inscriptions we are carried back to the old country, for, thoroughly settled as most of the old fellows were in their island homes, the old country beyond the seas was ever uppermost in their thoughts as home, and the majority of inscriptions, notably those to the memories of Scotsmen, record the name of the memorialised one's original birth-place.

Here is one to Francis Colepeper, of Hollingbourne, Kent, dated 1761. In this year the Colepepers were still in possession of their ancestral home near the pleasant little village which stands upon the line of the old pilgrim road to Canterbury, and we may be sure that Francis of Spanish Town often and often recalled its stately trees, and the quaint little church, and the fine old Elizabethan mansion facing the village street, as he sipped his Madeira on the verandah of his West Indian mansion.

So, no doubt, did Archibald Kerr, of Jedburgh, in the county of Roxburgh, often think of his home by the lonely Cheviots, ere he was laid to his rest in the year 1744; and as he rode about under the burning sun superintending the gangs, and seeing that no undue waste of "megass" was allowed, perhaps compared his lot with that of his left-handed—"ker-handed"—brethren in their troublous home in those troublous times. For in the year 1724 England and Scotland were still hammering at each other on the Border, notwithstanding that the two kingdoms had been some time united politically, and Archibald as a child might often have

heard the famous war-cry, "Jethart is here!"; might even have seen "Jethart Laa" put into execution, and certainly must have heard his nurse sing of that unfortunate family expedition over the Border and down the Usway Burn to Thropton, near Rothbury, when, out of five-and-fifty "buirdly" Kerrs, not half-a-dozen came home to tell the story of defeat.

So we go on from monument to monument. There are famous names on some of them, and records of famous deeds on many. There are the records of men who have died here full of honours and of years; but far exceeding them in number are those of men cut off by what is called "the climate," but which we, in the light of dearly-bought experience, know to be either personal wilful or criminal Governmental neglect, in the very flower of their youth. Here a marble tablet bears the names of a score of these victims, all carried away at one fell swoop. There, a grotesque carving from the hand of Roubilliac memorialises the death of a young officer by the explosion of a piece of artillery during the firing of a salute. Simplicity is the prevalent characteristic, and if embellishment is attempted, it rarely goes beyond armorial bearings, or the orthodox weeping female, or the inverted torch, or the heads of cherubs.

So engrossed do we become in our examination of these links binding the present to the past, that we are startled by the clash of bells announcing the approach of the hour of divine service; and a few minutes later the swish of trailing garments and the clatter of feet warn us to secure our seats.

In pours the black portion of the congregation. It is composed for the most part of women. They are gorgeously arrayed in silks and cottons of the most bewildering brilliancy, with golden beehive-shaped ornaments in their ears, and twists of gold about their necks, and all are beaming and smiling with the utmost complacency and self-satisfaction.

With a great many of them the first duty is to take off their boots or shoes. Small wonder, for half of them are in the habit of trudging twenty or thirty miles a day bare-footed to and from market, and the other half, if they do not use their feet so hardly, at any rate never confine them.

Poor, or wanting in proper pride indeed must be that woman who cannot raise a



pair of boots or shoes for Sunday use! It means agony, you may conceive, to keep pinched up in stiff leather a pair of feet used to free, untrammelled movement, but it has to be borne, and it is borne—for a few minutes. It is managed thus. On the road to church a halt is made at about two hundred yards' distance from the building for the purpose of putting on the boots or shoes, which have been hitherto held in the hands. Church is then hobbled into, and the boots or shoes taken off, to be again put on as the service draws to a close. Church is then hobbled out of, and at a respectable distance from it the instruments of torture are again got rid of, not to be put on again until this day week.

Later, the white folk begin to arrive. The men wear orthodox black coats, and some of them are actually provided with tall hats. The women are dressed with greater regard for comfort and coolness than for display, and carry fans, if not prayer-books. The children are West Indian in appearance, which means that they are poor little white-faced, large-eyed, weedy-limbed shrimps.

Then with much ado the choir enters. It is composed of black and coloured men and women, the former very strong in the collar and cuff department, the latter in tolerably recent European fashionable attire, and all very complacent and well-pleased with themselves. Amidst the old-world surroundings of the church itself, with the old familiar chants and hymn tunes ringing in the ears, it would be hard to realise that we are in the West Indies, were it not for these lines of black faces. Nor are the old country traditions confined to the church service, for when it has finished, there is a church parade held by the black people, whilst the "buckra folk," for whom such proceedings are too hot, get into their buggies and drive off.

The black ladies have their instruments of torture on now, and their attempts to mask physical suffering with an appearance of radiant contentment would be amusing if they were not pitiful. So they chatter and laugh with much fine-ladyish air, and the young bucks ogle and say pretty things and strike attitudes until the black beadle closes the church door with a bang, thereby notifying that it is high time for all dawdlers and gossips to clear out, and allow him to get to his dinner—and out of his boots.

## NATIONAL EMBLEMS AND NATIONAL COLOURS.

IN those olden times which had formerly such a charm for poet and romancist, but much of the glamour of which has been dissipated by modern research—in the olden times it was the custom for Christian Kings to adopt, as their own distinguishing ensign, the banner of the saint whom they worshipped as their special patron and protector. Thus we find the earliest French Kings assuming for this purpose the cloak of Saint Martin, the great Apostle of the Gauls. In his heathen days Martin, according to the legend, was a military tribune at Amiens, who, one bitter winter day, shared his cloak with a beggar, to protect him from the excessive cold. At night Christ appeared to the soldier in this rent vesture, and spake to him words of good cheer. It was blue, of course; blue, in ecclesiastical heraldry, being appropriated to Confessors of the Faith, because it is the colour of fidelity; an association which may have been suggested by Numbers, chapter fifteen, verse thirty-eight, where the children of Israel, as a mark or sign, are bidden to make them fringes in the borders of their garments, and to put upon the fringe "a riband of blue." Blue being Saint Martin's colour, it became the national colour of France during the first dynasty of its Kings.

The advent of the Carlovingian dynasty brought about a change in both the national colour and the national flag, red being substituted for blue, and Saint Denis for Saint Martin. The Carlovingian standard was really no other than the oriflamme, which has played so conspicuous a part in French history, but was not formally adopted until 1082, in the reign of Philip the First. It consisted of a red or crimson flag mounted on a gilded staff, the flag being cut into three "vandykes," to represent "tongues of fire," with a silken tassel between each. Neither gold nor silver ornament was about it—it was "*de cendal roujoyant et simple, sans pourtraicture d'aucune affaire.*" The old romance writers pretended that the infidel was blinded by merely looking upon it! In the "*Roman de Garin*" the Saracens are made to exclaim: "If we only see it, we shall be dead men." And Froissart affirms that as soon as it was unfurled at Rosbeque the fog vanished from the

French line of battle, leaving their enemies still shrouded in darkness.

Thus, red, the colour which the Church has consecrated to her martyrs, became in its turn the colour of the French Kings. They wore it on their coats-of-arms through the whole period of the Crusades, and as late as the closing decade of the fourteenth century were still faithful to this "glorious blazon." The famous Du Guesclin, fighting against our English chivalry in Poitou, wore the red cross while his adversaries wore the white. But after the great defeat at Agincourt, in 1415, the French Kings abandoned the oriflamme because it had been assumed by Henry the Fifth and his successors, and adopted white as the national colour, when England had discarded it. This is a curious but little-known historical fact.\*

But it may be surmised that in taking up white, Charles the Seventh and his son, Louis the Eleventh, were piously influenced by their devotion to the Virgin, of whose immaculate purity white was a fitting emblem. White, however, was not the only colour emblazoned by the French. During the long and bitter struggle between Catholics and Huguenots, the former carried scarves and colours of red, while scarves and colours of white were assumed by the King of Navarre and his partisans. Even the tricolour, which the French Revolution nationalised, was frequently used by the French sovereigns, not in their standards, perhaps, but in their liveries. Francis the First, Henry the Second, Francis the Second, and Henry the Third introduced it into the costume of their pages. In the reign of Henri Quatre, the three colours were united in the uniform of the halberdiers and the Court dress of the King's "valets-de-pied."

It is pretended that the combination was devised by Mary Stuart, during her brief reign as Queen of Francis the Second, the white representing France, the blue Scotland, and the red Switzerland—in compliment to the Swiss Guards, who were

uniformed in red—but, as we have seen, it was known before her time.

Towards the close of Henry the Fourth's reign, the Dutch, having thrown off the Spanish yoke, requested permission from the French King to assume his colours. He assented, and sent to the Stadtholder a tricolour, which is still the flag of Holland. Unlike the French, it is divided horizontally, in the following order: red (top), white, blue.

Some seventy or eighty years before France was involved in the flames of the Revolution—that is, at the epoch of the War of the Succession, when she was in close alliance with Spain and Bavaria—it was thought desirable to distinguish the Allied soldiers by a cockade, which combined the colours of the three nations: the white of France, the red of Spain, and the blue of Bavaria.

To none of these incidents, however, would it be wise to attribute the origin of the historic tricolour and cockade adopted by Revolutionary France. At the outset there seemed a likelihood that green, which Camille Desmoulins had popularised at the Palais Royal, would have become the national colour; but men remembered in time that it was that of the livery of the Comte d'Artois, the most unpopular of the Bourbon Princes, and it was thereupon discarded. A proposition was then made to assume the colours of the city of Paris—blue and red, as Dumas reminds us in his "Six Ans Après." To these was added the "white" of so many glorious memories, because it had been selected by the National Guard—always faithful to the throne and its traditions.

Not until some months after the capture of the Bastille was the tricolour definitively adopted, when Bailly and Lafayette presented it to Louis the Sixteenth in the great hall of the Hôtel de Ville; and the Convention issued a decree in which it was described as consisting of three colours—"disposées en trois bandes égales, de manière que le bleu soit attaché à la garde du pavillon, le blanc au milieu, et le rouge flottant dans les airs"—that is, in equal vertical sections, with the blue inward, the red outward, and the white between. This is the historic flag which Napoleon's legions, in conjunction with their eagles, bore victoriously from the Seine to the Elbe, the Tagus, the Borodino, and the Danube; which they planted victoriously on the walls of almost every European capital. After all, it held within its folds

\* This standard was powdered with fleurs-de-lys, which were eventually reduced to three in number, as symbolical, perhaps, of the Trinity. They represent, though very imperfectly, three flowers of the white lily joined together; and not, I think, as some authorities affirm, the white iris, though the latter is often called flower-de-luce. The white flag flourished until the introduction of the tricolour. At the Bourbon restoration, in 1830, it was revived, but finally hauled down in 1850. During the two Napoleonic empires, the tricolour was powdered with bees, and its middle stripe charged with the Imperial eagle.

the two monarchical colours, red and white, for a great nation cannot cut itself off from its past. But a French writer claims for it a greater antiquity than this fact implies. Its colours, he says, are those adopted, eighteen centuries ago and more, by the old aboriginal Gallic tribes; the blue being that of Celtic Gaul, the white of Belgic Gaul, and the red of Aquitanian Gaul; the three peoples among which, as one learned in one's boyhood, "omnis Gallia est divisa."

The "scarf" calls for a few words of notice. It was at first an ensign of chivalry. That of the "preux chevalier" was always of the colour which his lady preferred. Frequently the lady herself bestowed it upon her favoured knight, then it became an "emprise," and according to a rule of chivalry he held it until some more fortunate knight prevailed over him in the lists, or until some enterprise which she had imposed upon him was accomplished.

When the Orders of Chivalry were established, the scarf, by its shape and colour, served to distinguish them from one another. The commanders of armies, and the leaders of factions, such as the Guelphs and Ghibellines of Italy, or the Protestants and Catholics of Germany at a later date, and our own Roundheads and Cavaliers, followed the example. The scarf worn by the Crusaders was white, and they wore it "en sautoir," or across the breast obliquely, as was the custom down to the seventeenth century. That of the Huguenots was red, that of the Leaguers black, from the death of their great leader, Guise, until on the assassination of Henry the Third they changed it to green, substituting the colour of hope for that of sorrow and mourning. In 1692, after the battle of Steinkirk, the scarf was transformed into a cravat, which was soon afterwards replaced by the cockade.

The Stuart cockade was white, the Hanoverian black. In the song which commemorates the battle of Sheriffmuir, our English soldiers are called "the red-coat lads wi' black cockades"; and to these black cockades allusion is often made by Fielding and Smollett. The French, before the Revolution, was white. The Austrian is black and yellow; the Prussian, black and white.

As an emblem from the animal world, England has annexed the lion; and notwithstanding Livingstone's depreciation

of the king of beasts, I am not sure that our masterful nation could have made a better choice. In the Royal arms are three lions passant, gardant—in heraldic language—that is, walking and showing the full face. The first lion was borrowed from the arms of Rollo, Duke of Normandy, and the second represented the province of Maine. These were the two lions borne by William the First, William the Second, Henry the First, and Stephen. Henry the Second added a third to represent the Duchy of Aquitaine, which he had acquired through his wife Eleanor. The French heralds call the lion passant a "leopard"; and Napoleon was fond of boasting to his soldiers that he would drive "the leopards into the sea"—but he never did!

"Supporters" were introduced by Edward the Third, who planted on the dexter side of the Royal shield a lion, and on the sinister an eagle. The lion was retained by his successors, but for the eagle each sovereign, until the accession of James the First, substituted his own family badge: Henry the Fifth, an antelope; Edward the Fourth, a bull; Richard the Third, the historic boar; Henry the Seventh, the Tudor dragon; Henry the Eighth, Mary, and Elizabeth, a greyhound. James the First replaced the greyhound by the legendary unicorn, and the lion and the unicorn have never since been disturbed in their companionship.

The lion rampant, in the arms of the northern kingdom, was first assumed by King William of Scotland. It was borrowed from the arms of the Earl of Huntingdon, from whom the Scottish sovereigns partly traced their descent.

In those days princes and paladins took a strange delight in such heraldic devices. Henry the First bore a golden lion; Richard the First, a sleeping lion; Henry the Eighth, a lion crowned; Edward the Fourth—but here let me quote from Lord Lytton, who, in his picturesque romance, "The Last of the Barons," describing the approach to the Royal gardens, says: "The stairs were covered with leathern carpets, powdered with the white rose and the fleur de lis; either side lined by the bearers of the many banners of Edward, displaying the white lion of March, the black bull of Clare, the cross of Jerusalem, the dragon of Aragon, and the rising sun, which he had assumed as his peculiar war badge since the battle of Mortimer's Cross." At Barnet the silver sun was the

cognisance on all his banners, and shone victoriously on that bloody field.

The national emblems which France at different times has taken up from the animal world are the cock and the eagle. When the former was adopted, authorities—after their manner—are not agreed; but by a process of elimination it can easily be shown to be of comparatively recent date. Thus, none of the French Kings patronised Chanticleer. A lion was the device of Philip Augustus; a wild boar of Louis the Eighth; a dragon of St. Louis; an eagle of Philip the Bold; a leopard of Charles the Fair. King John's device was a swan; Charles the Fifth's, a greyhound; Charles the Seventh and Charles the Eighth displayed a winged stag; Louis the Twelfth, a porcupine; and Francis the First, a salamander. In fact, the Gallic cock does not seem to have crowed or clapped its wings until about the middle of the seventeenth century, when the medallists took possession of it. In 1665, the town of Quesnoy was delivered from the Spaniards by a French army. A medal was struck to commemorate the victory, and upon its obverse was engraved a cock (France) in full pursuit of a lion (Spain), together with the inscription, "*Cantat, fugat*," in evident allusion to a superstition of the ancients, that the cock, by his crowing, could put to flight the king of beasts.

Thenceforth the cock is not infrequently met with as a Gallic emblem; but it did not attain a national character until the French Revolution. In 1789 it was adopted by the National Guard, apparently from a classical reminiscence that in the old mythology it figured as the bird of Mars. But only for a brief period was it allowed to enjoy its "pride of place." The din of the Reign of Terror silenced it; the red Cap of Liberty terrified it into flight; and after 1793 it is met with no more except in foreign caricatures.

We come next to the eagle, which is met with in the heraldry of all warlike races. The strength and vigour of its flight, its apparent courage, its glowing eye, its home among the misty crags, all these particulars impressed the imagination of the world's "grey forefathers"; so that in their myths and legends the eagle is always to the fore. You hear its far-spreading pinions winnowing the air. The bird of Zeus, you see it grasping the thunderbolt in its talons. It fears not the blinding radiance of the sun. Oftentimes it employs

its prowess and puissance as a champion and deliverer. It is represented as saving Helen when the sacerdotal knife had been whetted to shed her blood; as saving Valeria Lupera, when she was being led as a victim to the altar. It was everywhere accepted as the enemy of death—as the symbol of immortality. According to the poets, every decade it soars into the "fiery region," and thence swoops down into the sea, to take on a new coat of plumage and a new lease of life. So Spenser sings:

An eagle fresh out of the ocean wave,  
Where he hath left his plumes all hoary gray,  
And decks himself with feathers youthly gay.

In the mythologies it is the bird of power, victory, dominion. The Garuda of the Hindu is the bearer of the god Vishnu, and with its radiance overcomes all evil spirits. In the Greek we are told that when Zeus was preparing for his war against the Titans, an eagle brought him a thunderbolt, and thereafter he took the bird as his emblem. In the Norse mythology it is a sombre figure, assumed by demons, or perhaps by Odin himself, shrouded in tempest-clouds, or in the gloom of night. The storm-giant, Hræwelgr, sits in the guise of an eagle on the threshold of heaven, and blows blasts of wind over all the earth; while on the great tree Ygdrasil an eagle watches everything that happens. In Egypt it was the emblem of the river-god, the Nile.

As a symbol of celestial power it naturally came to typify earthly power. In warfare it seems to have been first carried by the Persians, who believed that Mithra—the sun—deigning to reveal himself in a visible form, took that of the eagle; and it was a golden eagle, brilliant as the sun, which Cyrus planted on all his standards. Its martial fame, however, it owes to the Romans, who from a very early period selected it as their national device. Under their Kings, under their Consuls, under their Emperors, it led their armies to victory. Eagles of bronze or silver, with wings outstretched as if yearning to speed to far-off lands, were carried before the legions on long poles, and inspired them with a spirit of indomitable resolve. Each legion had its own eagle, which it regarded with almost religious veneration. The soldiers swore by it solemnly as by a divinity, and such oaths were held to be of peculiar sacredness. And it retained among the Romans its protective character; a criminal about to fall beneath the cen-

turion's axe, or a prisoner condemned to death, escaped if he could succeed in grasping the standard-bearer's staff, and thus placing himself under the protection of the mystic eagle.

In the Roman triumphs it was the centre of pomp and circumstance; crowns of laurels and garlands of flowers adorned it. When a legion chose a site for its camp, its eagle was set up in the centre; if two legions encamped together, they planted a double eagle, with heads and wings opposed, on their boundary line; a practice which explains, perhaps, the two-fold eagle engraved on the Column of Antoninus. At all events, this eagle must not be mistaken for the prototype of the double-headed bird which the Byzantine Emperors adopted as symbolical of their sovereignty over the East and West.

If the battle went against the Romans, as on the fatal field of Thrasymene, they never suffered their eagles to fall into the victors' hands. The standard-bearer snapped his spear in twain, and buried deep the eagle and the broken staff which it surmounted. To the devout care of a standard-bearer on one such occasion we are indebted for the sole legionary eagle which has come down to us. It was found in Germany, on the lands of the Count von Erlach—made of bronze, gilded; twenty inches high; weighing eight pounds. The bearer had doubtlessly buried it when he saw his legion, the twenty-third, giving way before the German attack. Thus the enemies of Rome might prove victorious, but were allowed no opportunity of exhibiting what would have been their fairest trophies—except in the case of the wretched Varus, whose eternal shame it was to witness not only the destruction of his legions, but the loss of their eagles.

It was a tradition of the North that two of these were carried away by the conquering bands of Arminius; and that one, of bronze, was given to the Germans; the other, of silver, to the Sarmatians. Hence the black eagle in the arms of Germany; the white in those of Poland. Picturesque, but not true! Certainly, the Empire, which now bears a double-headed eagle, was at first contented with the bird "*au naturel*"; but this was inherited from the Roman Cæsars, whom the German Emperors represented. The bird received a second head in 802, to typify the union of Germany and Rome.

The Muscovites, as they increased in power, grew jealous of this double-headed

emblem, and Ivan the Third, on marrying the daughter of the Greek Emperor, Michael Palæologus, thought himself entitled to carry it also. He therefore gave orders that on all his coinage a double-headed eagle should be engraved, corresponding in every detail with the Imperial bird of Germany. But when the new currency appeared, lo and behold, the Russian eagle, instead of soaring with outspread wings, carried its pinions drooping; and the indignant Czar immediately hung the designers and engravers who had ventured on this deviation.

The eagle was adopted by Napoleon when he became Emperor in 1804. The grand ceremony of distributing the new emblem to the army, in place of the national colours, took place in the Champ de Mars on the day after his coronation. Before the Emperor, who was seated on a magnificent throne, deployed his splendid columns. He rose and addressed them: "Soldiers, behold your colours! These eagles will always be your rallying-point. They will always be where your Emperor may think them necessary for the defence of his throne and his people. Swear to sacrifice your lives in their defence, and by your courage to keep them constantly in the path of victory. Swear!"

These eagles, during the years of Napoleon's reign, were carried on many an arduous march and bloody battle-field. The French soldiers came to regard them with a sentiment of devotion worthy of the ancient Romans—a sentiment which Napoleon carefully nourished. In his eloquent speeches and bulletins allusions to the eagles were seldom absent. The scene when, after his abdication at Fontainebleau in 1814, he bade farewell to his Old Guard, was characteristic. In concluding his address, he said: "Adieu, my comrades! I should wish to press you all to my bosom; let me at least embrace your standard." At these words General Petit, who was in command, took the eagle and came forward. Napoleon received him in his arms, and kissed the eagle. The silence was broken only by the sobs of the veterans. "Farewell, once more, my old comrades! Let this kiss be imprinted on all your hearts!"

So much for the Imperial eagle of France, which was abolished by the Bourbons, restored by Napoleon the Third in 1852, and finally set aside by the Republic in 1870.

The standard of the United States—

"the stars and stripes"—has seven red bars on a white ground, and in the upper corner a square of forty-two white stars, one for each State, upon a field azure. The German Imperial standard shows the historic iron cross on a gold or yellow field, each quarter being charged with three black eagles and an Imperial crown, while over the whole is a yellow or gold shield, with the Imperial arms ensigned with a crown and surrounded by the collar of the Black Eagle—a truly elaborate piece of heraldic work! The Russian standard is yellow, and carries the arms of the empire. The white standard—blue bordered—of Italy is decorated with a fine show of the King's armorial bearings. The Belgian standard is striped vertically, in black, yellow, and red; that of the Netherlands horizontally, in red, white, and blue. Each carries the Royal achievement. The Imperial standard of Austria displays the eagle of the empire on a yellow field, and has an indented border of gold, silver, blue, and black. The Spanish standard is blazoned all over with the Royal quarterings; that of Portugal is red, charged with the Portuguese arms and crown. The ancient flag of Denmark—it dates from the thirteenth century—is red, with a white cross, which, in a central square, has the Royal arms, surrounded by the collars of the Elephant and the Dannebrog.

And now for a few words upon devices.

A device may be described as a kind of "figured metaphor," by means of which one object is represented by another which bears a likeness to it. Thus, the life of a man, his origin, his high deeds, by an emblem or image. Even the ancients made use of devices, Kings and chiefs carrying them on their bucklers and ensigns; as a rule, however, these were simply emblems without legends. Thus, at the siege of Thebes, the soothsayer Amphiaræus carried a dragon on his buckler, Perseus a Gorgon's head, Capaneus a hydra, and Polynices a sphynx—a symbolical reminiscence of the means by which his father Œdipus attained to sovereign power.

In the course of time the device was developed, and a meaning put into it. For example, Augustus engraved on his coinage an anchor entwined with a dolphin, and the inscription, "Festina lente." But it was not until mediæval times—the age of romance and chivalry—when tournaments, carousels, and all manner of chivalrous functions rendered the use of these pic-

turesque devices absolutely necessary. Then they branched out into four distinct varieties: 1, those designed in imitation of arabesques, by colours or combinations of colours, of which the last existing souvenir is the "lacs d'amour," which may still be seen on the escutcheon of the Kings of Sardinia; 2, devices enclosing only words, and therefore known as "âmes sans corps"; 3, those which had a figure but no words, "corps sans âme"; 4, those which had both body, "corps," and soul, "âme," that is, both the material representative of the idea, and the legend or interpreting motto.

To the fourth class a few words may be given, as it was the class which gained the widest popularity and enjoyed the longest life. The art of composing them was subjected to severe rules. The "body" and the "soul" were required to be in such relation to each other that the "soul" should invariably explain the "body." The legend must be concise, neatly turned, and ingeniously suggestive—like the "Deadichado" of the disinherited knight in "Ivanhoe." It had always to be applicable to the person, as well as to the material object forming the "body," and it must not be drawn from things unknown, nor must it be too enigmatic, or too facile, too humble, or, above all, too arrogant. Again, it was essential that the figure should be agreeable to the eye, and its idea to the mind. Finally, the device was perfect only when the "body" was unique, and the "soul," or motto, in a language which was not the mother-tongue of him who bore it.

The motto ought not to contain more than eight syllables. That of our Order of the Garter, "Honi soit qui mal y pense," contains only seven; that of our Kings, "Dieu et mon droit," only four. The device of Leo the Tenth was a yoke, with "Suave" for the motto—"The yoke of the Lord is sweet." That of Henry the Third, King of France and Poland, two crowns on the earth, and one up above, with the motto "Manet ultima cælo;" that of Charles the Fifth, the pillars of Hercules, and the legend "Ne plus ultra." Devices went out of vogue in the seventeenth century, and now survive only in the coats-of-arms of our older families, where the reader, if he be so disposed, may study them at leisure, and examine how nearly they approach the ideal embodied in the foregoing rules.

## ONLY JACK.

## A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

HE was tall, and by no means ill-looking, with dark brown hair and eyes, and straight, well-cut features; a pleasant, manly fellow enough, whom everybody liked, and nobody considered.

For he was "only Jack." In those words you read the whole history of his position; so far, at least, as his domestic life was concerned.

Some people seem born to be alighted and put upon; Jack was one of them.

His sisters made use of him when it served their purpose, and then forgot his very existence until the next time they wanted him; his mother never dreamed of consulting him until she had made up her own mind, when she entrusted him with the execution of her wishes, he, of course, defraying all expenses. Why should she trouble herself with the discussion of details and such annoying matters? Why should she ask his opinion? It was "only Jack," she said.

Mother and sisters all lived in Jack's house, and they lived in very good style. That is to say, they spent a great deal of money, and kept a great deal of company; and whatever Jack thought about it, he never said a word. Why, indeed, should he, when nobody asked his opinion?

Jack had been the nominal head of the family for some years, and the actual head of Myerson's Bank. He was very regular in his attendance at the bank, and no one there would ever have dreamed of applying that alighting epithet "only" to Mr. Myerson. Perhaps this was one reason why he spent so many hours beneath that respectable, if somewhat sombre, roof; for, after all, it is never pleasant to be treated as a person of no consequence; and the most simple, unassuming nature cannot feel exactly grateful to those who consistently adopt this tone. But whatever he felt, Jack said nothing, and so nobody was any the wiser.

Jack's house—the house where his father and grandfather had lived before him—stood some little way out of the town. It was a rambling, picturesque old building, all overgrown with ivy and flowering creepers, and the grounds that surrounded it were extremely beautiful. It was a very pleasant house to stay at, and so many people knew who had been fortunate enough to receive an invitation to pass a

few days there; but the guests rarely remained long, more especially if they were ladies, and not—as yet—well stricken in years; for the Myerson girls liked change, and usually tired of their acquaintances with astonishing rapidity. "A week," said Constance, the younger and cleverer sister, "is amply long enough to exhaust the average person's topics of conversation, and when those are once exhausted, the person becomes a bore. It is then better to part, and to start fresh;" and on this theory she consistently acted.

But every rule must have its exceptions: little Minnie Brender had already been at least fourteen days beneath the Myersons' hospitable roof, and there was as yet no talk of her leaving; on the contrary, Constance herself spoke of engagements a week hence, taking it for granted, apparently, that Minnie would bear her part in them, and seeming not only contented, but well pleased that it should be so; and yet the girl's topics of conversation were by no means particularly varied. What, then, was the meaning of it? Jack, who was rather an observing young man in a quiet sort of way, would very much have liked to know; but there was nothing in the circumstances of the case—so far as he was acquainted with them—which could throw any light upon the mystery.

Constance had made Minnie's acquaintance while on a visit to a friend; she liked her, she said, and wished to see more of her. But then Constance liked so many people; there was nothing unusual in that, though there was in the fact that the liking had lasted so long. Minnie was a pretty little thing, with big, soft eyes, and a nice voice; not at all like Jack's sisters, who were tall, stately young women, in whose nature softness and gentleness were by no means pronounced characteristics. She seemed a little shy, too, Jack thought; but then, to be sure, he had scarcely said two words to her except at the dinner-table, and there were always such a lot of people about that a fellow had no opportunity of really making acquaintance with any one of them. Besides, when they usually stayed such a very short time, it was really hardly worth while to do so; from which it will be seen that Jack's views on these matters differed considerably from his sister's, though it was not often that the difference caused him anything more than a momentary feeling of regret.

Jack had returned from the bank much

earlier than usual one afternoon, and was pondering in a quiet way over this matter while he smoked a peaceful cigar in the garden, when the sound of voices attracted his attention. He strolled on down the path; and as he approached the speakers, the following words fell on his ear.

"No, Connie; I cannot do it. Don't ask me."

"Nonsense, you ridiculous child! I tell you, it's only Jack!"

"That is no reason why I——" she broke off suddenly, colouring hotly, as Jack himself emerged from the shadows of the shrubbery on to the sunlit lawn.

"There, did you ever see such a coincidence?" Constance exclaimed. "We were just speaking of you; Minnie wanted to ask you——"

"No, indeed! I never thought of such a thing!"

"Oh, yes, you did! Don't be absurd, dear. The fact is, Jack, her guardian is staying at the Venners', and she wants to go and see him; but we have to drive in the opposite direction, so we thought——"

"Please, Connie, don't say any more; you mean it kindly, but——"

"Will you walk over there with her?"

"Delighted, of course, if——"

"It's all settled, then. I must go and dress; good-bye, and a pleasant walk to you."

And Constance swept across the lawn, without giving them time to raise any objections. That was Constance's way; she always settled things out of hand, and often without paying much attention to other people's wishes in the matter.

Jack began to laugh; Constance's little ways often amused him immensely, though she was far from suspecting it; then, seeing that Minnie really looked embarrassed and annoyed, he stopped abruptly.

"I hope you don't mind Con's nonsense?" he said. "It isn't worth bothering about. You know I shall really be very glad to take you over there."

"Indeed, Mr. Myerson, I couldn't think of it! I don't particularly care about going, and I never dreamed of asking you; it was all Connie's doing."

"I know that," hastily; "but if you wish to go——"

"But I don't! At least—it's of no consequence, thank you."

"But we have neither of us anything to do this afternoon, and if you want to see

your friend, I want particularly to see Dick Venner—— No, it isn't humbug!" as she looked at him questioningly: "I really mean it. Won't you let me be of use to you?"

"You are very kind, but—have you really nothing better to do?"

"Really and truly!" and he smiled. He had a very nice smile, she thought. "Are you ready, for if so, we may as well be off at once!"

So they started; and reaching the garden-gate, passed out into the narrow, winding lane, which led through pleasant fields fragrant with new-mown hay, to the Venners' house some two miles distant. It was a charming walk, up hill and down dale; with ever-varying views, and no monotony about it.

Minnie was rather silent at first; perhaps Jack's polite assurances had only half satisfied her, perhaps she had private causes for preoccupation quite apart from him; whatever the reason, he certainly found conversation somewhat uphill work; but he persevered gallantly, and at length his efforts were rewarded. Needless to say, his conversational powers were not highly thought of in his own family; and, in point of fact, he was not a ready talker; there was small inducement to talk, when no one apparently cared to listen; and his sisters' girl friends were not usually the sort of women he cared to talk to; they were apt to be fast, and rather noisy, and a little too conscious of their own attractions to attract him.

But with this quiet little thing, it was different; if she did not say much, he soon found she was an admirable listener, and scarcely had he discovered this before she was taking her share—a very small and timid one—in the conversation. Jack felt quite proud, and began to enjoy himself amazingly. Yes; it was a very pleasant walk!

At length the chimneys of the Venners' house appeared above the trees, and Jack pointed them out to his companion.

"We shall be there in five minutes now," he said regretfully.

"So soon? I did not know we had come so far," she replied, looking along the road before them. "I wonder whether he will be out?"

Something in her tone—some fleeting expression in her soft grey eyes—made him fancy it would not occasion her deep regret if he were; but this might be a mistaken idea.



"He is not expecting you, then?"

"Oh, no! He does not know I am here. But Constance thought I ought to go and see him. It was she who told me he was visiting the Venners."

"Constance is very fond of telling people what they ought to do," he laughed. "Don't let her order you about too much, or she'll give you no peace."

"She was quite right in this case. Colonel Leigh has always been very kind to me, and I owe him every respect and consideration," she said, quietly but firmly; rather too firmly, he thought, for the circumstances, but then, perhaps, he hardly understood what those circumstances were.

"He is your guardian, is he not?" he asked, as he paused to open the gate.

"Yes. What a pretty drive! I have never been here before, but the views are lovely."

Apparently she did not wish to discuss Colonel Leigh, and Jack felt a sudden curiosity to see the man; which, however, as he presently learnt on enquiry at the front door, was not to be gratified for the present.

"The Colonel's out, sir; went out directly after luncheon with my mistress and the young ladies, and they've not been in since; and Mr. Dick, he's out, too. Won't you come in and rest, sir; and won't the young lady have some tea after her walk?"

"What do you say, Miss Brender; shall we wait?"

"If the Colonel is likely to return——" Minnie began doubtfully.

"He may, miss; and then again he may not. Let me bring the tea out in the verandah, miss, and perhaps he'll be in while you're taking it."

"I really think we'd better say yes," Jack said, as she looked at him in evident hesitation. "Mrs. Venner was quite hurt once when the girls went home without letting Jones give them tea; wasn't she, Jones?"

"She was, sir. She told me as 'ow I was never to let it 'appen again."

"Then we will have it, please; and let the Colonel know directly he comes in," Minnie said, with a sudden air of resolution.

"Yes, miss."

He conducted them through a wide hall to the drawing-room, and thence to the verandah, where, under masses of clustering roses that filled the air with their

delicious perfumes, the tea-table stood ready.

"This is certainly better than trudging back at once," said Jack, as they sat in the pleasant shade, and waited for the tea. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes, but—it seems rather cool making ourselves at home in this way. I suppose you know Mrs. Venner very well?"

"Rather! I assure you we are doing the very thing of all others she would approve of, so you may be quite easy on that score," Jack said reassuringly, as he took off his hat and hung it on the creepers near. "Odd thing your friend should be here, and just now, too!" he added thoughtfully.

"Not so very odd, for Colonel Leigh has a great many friends. I should not have known he was here if Constance had not told me."

"Does Constance know him, then? Ah, like your guardian, she has a great many friends!"

"She has met him, I believe; and they have mutual acquaintances. I think it must be very confusing to have so many friends; a few would be much nicer."

"Oh, if you found you were getting mixed amongst them you could easily drop a few—as Con does."

"But I should not like that at all. It would seem so heartless and unkind," she exclaimed.

"That wouldn't trouble her!" cynically. "No, don't look so horrified, Miss Brender; I'm not defending the system, I'm only explaining to you how it is done."

"But you don't approve of it?" the girl asked, looking at him doubtfully.

"Not in the least. It is contrary alike to my principles and my practice. I believe in having few friends, and never changing them. But in the sort of whirligig society my people go in for, it's next to impossible even to make a friend, far less keep one."

"What a pity!" sympathetically. "But you have the Venners, and neighbours like them?"

"Oh, yes, we have lots of neighbours; any number of them. But then one doesn't choose one's friends simply because they happen to live next door."

"That is true," thoughtfully.

"In fact," Jack continued, "they have to be very much one's friends before one can get over their living next door at all."

"You would realise the truth of that

very forcibly if you lived, as I do, in a little village," Minnie laughed. "Next-door neighbours are Miss Framley's pet grievance, and they give us no peace. Miss Framley is my governess, you know, and she is very particular about the acquaintances we make."

"She is quite right," Jack said emphatically; and somehow he felt glad to know how carefully this pretty little girl was guarded in her home life.

So they talked on, idly enough, until the arrival of Jones and the tea-tray gave them some further occupation; and Minnie grew quite bright and animated over the cake and thin bread-and-butter. The novelty of the position, as she thus did the honours in somebody else's house, appeared to afford her a certain childlike satisfaction, and she laughed and chatted more gaily than Jack had ever heard her before; so that altogether it was a very cheerful little party that sat in Mrs. Venner's verandah that sunny afternoon.

So, at least, thought one unseen spectator, as he paused for a moment at the drawing-room window and gazed at the scene before him with wondering eyes. Then he stepped out on to the verandah, and Minnie turned with a little start and saw him.

"Colonel!" she cried, and she sprang up to meet him. "You have come back, then!"

"Yes, I have come back," he said quietly as he shook hands with her. "Were you waiting for me?"

"Of course; did not the man tell you? I came here to see you."

"And where are you staying, if I may ask?"

"With the Myersons, two miles off. Mr. Myerson kindly walked over with me as I did not know the way," she added, introducing him rather nervously, Jack thought.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Myerson." He spoke with perfect courtesy, but not the slightest cordiality. "I am sorry I was not in when you arrived. You should have sent me word, Minnie."

"But I thought you were leaving to-morrow. Connie told me I had better come at once."

"Do you mean Miss Myerson?" he asked. "Do I owe this visit to her?"

Somehow he looked as though the suggestion were scarcely an agreeable one to him.

"Yes; at least, she suggested it."

"She is very good to interest herself in my affairs."

He spoke in a perfectly colourless tone, and yet Jack felt uneasy as he heard him. He scarcely knew why, but he had an uncomfortable conviction that Connie had better not have meddled in the matter.

Colonel Leigh was a handsome, soldierly-looking man, whose appearance would have commanded attention anywhere; his hair was slightly grizzled, but his age could not have exceeded fifty, if, indeed, it were so much, and his expression was singularly cold and severe.

Minnie was very evidently afraid of him, and his manner to her, though profoundly courteous, was by no means reassuring. She might owe him every respect and consideration; she said she did, and no doubt she knew best, and the debt would be paid to the uttermost farthing, of that Jack felt sure; but she wasn't fond of him, and the young man noticed with a satisfaction for which he did not attempt to account, that she was not half so much at ease now as she had been a quarter of an hour ago.

"Has Mrs. Venner come in yet?" he asked, presently, wondering a little at her non-appearance.

"No," the Colonel replied, "she has gone on to see a friend with her daughters, and will not be back for some time."

Jack began to feel uncomfortably in the way. Conversation flagged terribly, so presently he rose, and strolled off down the garden under the pretence of seeing Dick's dog.

"Perhaps he wants to talk to her, and I'm in the way," he said to himself; and yet there was an appealing look in Minnie's big eyes as he turned away, which almost recalled him to her side.

He did not stay in the garden long, and as he came back to the verandah he heard Colonel Leigh say with great distinctness:

"That is enough, Minnie; we will now drop the subject. You meant no harm, I know, but it must not happen again."

"And you are not angry with me?"

"I have said you meant no harm. Miss Myerson should not have done it, but it can't be helped now; and you— Ah, Mr. Myerson, are you ready? Miss Brender is sufficiently rested now to return home."

"I'm quite at her service. I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you there, while you are in the neighbourhood?"

"Thank you. Your mother has kindly

sent me an invitation for the day after tomorrow, so we shall meet again."

"Oh, yes; the girls have a dance coming off, I know."

Minnie looked a little surprised, Jack thought, but she said nothing, and the Colonel made no further allusion to the subject.

He walked down the drive with them, and saw them fairly started on their homeward way. Then he turned away and strode back to the house, a very sombre look on his grave face.

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER I.

How cold it was!

A biting north-east wind swept the little country station from end to end, driving before it fine particles of snow which had already whitened the platform and railroad, though the snow had only begun to fall half an hour ago.

"We'll be about snowed up when the wind falls and gives it a chance," said the station-master cheerfully, to one of the two passengers who were unfortunate enough to find themselves stranded on the platform of Weybourne Station.

It was about five o'clock on a mid-December afternoon. One of the passengers, unaccustomed to time-tables, and helplessly inexperienced in the ways of travelling altogether, had made a mistake, and had discovered, on alighting from the London train which passed through Weybourne at three o'clock, to change to a local line, that she would have to wait three hours before she could get a train to take her on to her ultimate destination.

To the sympathising pity of the station-master, she had been waiting there ever since. At five o'clock there was still another hour before her. During the first hour and a half, though other trains had passed through the station and two had even stopped there, she had shared the station with the sympathising station-master and a surly porter, whose air of glancing at her as if he considered that it was entirely for her convenience that he was detained there in the rising gale, further depressed her. About half-past four, however, the second train that stopped had deposited another passenger on the platform, who, from some words

she caught as he spoke to the station-master, seemed to be going on to the same place as herself.

Faintly relieved, and feeling that the gloomy porter could no longer be aggrieved that he had had all his trouble for nothing, she retreated once more to the waiting-room, from which she had emerged on the arrival of the train, partly for a little variation in the monotony of waiting for her own, and partly from that indefinable fear that haunts the brain of the female traveller unaccustomed to the ways of travel, that though her own train was not due for another hour and a half, this particular one might be it. But she did not stay many moments on the platform. The biting wind with its whirling, stinging burden of powdered snow, the gloom of the badly-lighted station, its light made still more uncertain by the blustering wind-gusts, drove her back to the comparative comfort of the waiting-room.

The care of the station-master had, at any rate, ensured a good fire for her. She sat down again forlornly near the fire, to possess her soul in patience for the hour and a half that had still to drag out its weary length. She had read all the literature in which her slender travelling resources had allowed her to indulge.

But when, after about a quarter of an hour, the door opened brusquely, and her fellow passenger entered, she hastily, in a fit of shyness, took up the cheap periodical she had already read from the first word to the last, including most of the advertisements on the cover, and pretended to be absorbed in it once more.

The other passenger, a young man about the middle height, comfortably muffled up in a thick ulster, looked slightly astonished at seeing her there.

As he glanced at her, he saw her shiver in the gust of icy wind that swept with him into the waiting-room. He hastily shut the door and came forward to the middle of the room, glancing again at her, first with an indifferent curiosity, then with greater interest, as he caught a glimpse of the hair coiled under the prim and ugly boat-shaped hat. He saw a slender slip of a girl, looking about sixteen. She was shabbily dressed, with a jacket of old-fashioned cut adorned with a cheap fur, such as a shop-girl might wear.

It gave him a distinct shock of disapproval, contrasted as it was with the beautiful hair coiled in a magnificent mass round the back of a decidedly shapely head.

The face might under other conditions have been pretty, but it was pale and thin, and at the present moment looked so tired and colourless as to be almost insipid.

She never once glanced in his direction, and read on with such intentness that her expression took a severity which checked a cheery remark he was on the point of uttering, as to the dismalness of their present position. It would have considerably amused him if he had suspected that it was the sheer fright of shyness which had resolved itself into that forbidding unresponsiveness of feature.

He did not stay in the waiting-room many minutes. The roaring fire, the closed door made the atmosphere almost suffocating, at least to his sturdy health and strength, and he ventured out again on to the platform. He caught sight of the station-master retreating into his own domain—the porter had at last gone home for his tea—and joined him.

"You've got another passenger, Robson!" the young man said cheerily, accepting the station-master's invitation to step inside for a few moments.

It was almost impossible to stay on the platform, so the young man sat down on the station-master's chair, while Robson accommodated himself with a box which was also waiting for the Longwood train.

"Yes, sir," he said. Then with an air of imparting a piece of interesting and startling information: "She's for Moorlands!"

The information received all the astonishment he had expected.

"No!" Doubt, disgust, and wonder crossing the young man's good-looking face. "Such a child, too! It's a confounded shame!"

The station-master nodded.

"That's the sixth within eighteen months. And she's as innocent as the rest, I'll be bound! They're trying something different this time, sir. I assure you, it quite took me aback when she let out where she was going. I suppose they think she'll be easier managed—at her age, and innocent as a lamb, I'd say, judging by her face!"

The young man muttered an exclamation, in the meaning of which the station-master emphatically concurred.

"Lord! she ought to be warned! But of course, 'tain't no business of mine, sir."

Nor that of the young man either. The latter felt that to the full.

"Well, she'll find it out soon enough,

that's one good thing!" he said grimly. "The others did, and cleared out at once, though some of them, I should say, were able enough to take care of themselves," with a laugh, as he recalled the age and appearance of certain candidates for the position which the girl with the glorious hair was on her way to fill.

"That's just it, sir!" eagerly. "But I've been thinking that being so young like and innocent, and"—with the hesitation of a delicacy as fine as that of any gentleman—"not too well off, I should say, she might, you see, sir, get drawn on into staying, not knowing the unpleasantness and danger like——"

"But"—a sudden thought struck the young man as he recalled the common trimming and ancient cut of the jacket—"perhaps she mayn't be going as that at all. They are changing servants as usual, I happen to know."

A queer look crossed the station-master's rugged face as he glanced at the young man. Then with a short laugh:

"Lord, doctor, you've only got to speak to her, to see of what stuff she's made."

"She's not dressed as well as a lady's-maid, certainly," said the young man, with a laugh, "and she looks so pale and tired!" with genuine pity.

"Not much wonder! She's been travelling, you may say, two days. She came up from Cornwall yesterday. Poor young lady! She made a mistake in the train from London, and has been waiting here since three!"

"Poor child! And not a cup of tea or anything to be had in this confounded hole! She must be dying for something," as a vision of the pale, wearied face rose up before him. "Why, she won't get to Moorlands till nearly eight now!"

"I tried to persuade her to have some tea, sir," said Robson, with a faint touch of insulted dignity. "But she was shy like, or—afraid of giving trouble."

He did not like to say what he believed to be the real reason. The young man put it into words for him.

"More likely afraid of the expense, poor little thing!" pitifully. "I say, Robson, your wife's a good soul. Do you think if I ran down there and asked her, we could get something up here? If she'd help us, I'll see that the poor child has some."

The station-master was only too glad to assist in the plot. He had begun to feel a kindly responsibility in the comfort

and welfare of the girl passenger left on his hands for all these hours.

"And so pretty spoken as she is, poor young lady! I wish you had come sooner, Dr. Burton. You'd have managed it before now."

The young man laughed in his cheery, masterful way, and buttoning himself up into his thick overcoat, and pulling up the collar about his ears, he started off for the station-master's cottage, where he was a well-known and welcome visitor. It was not a pleasant walk in the darkness, over a rough road in the very teeth of the driving wind. It was nearly a ten minutes' walk in fine weather and by daylight, and it was some time before the doctor reappeared, laden with a big basket.

He had forgotten nothing. The kettle was boiled in the station, and a little later, as the girl passenger sat wearied to death, and sick at heart, anxious for the unknown future, and tender regretful longings for the past, the door of the waiting-room opened, and the station-master appeared with a small attractive tray, containing tea, a plate of the most temptingly-cut home-made bread-and-butter, and another of home-made cake.

"If you please, miss," he said apologetically, "the gentleman passenger has been having tea, and I thought, as it was here, you might be glad of some, too. It will be nearly three hours yet before you get to Moorlanda."

The tired eyes brightened longingly at the sight of the tempting tray. Then the face fell at a sudden thought of the cost of the luxury.

"Thank you very much! How much?" nervously taking out her purse.

"Threepence, ma'am, please," promptly.

The look of pleased relief in her face showed that he had gauged her resources fairly.

"It's dreadfully cheap!" she said shyly.

"And I am really very glad of it," handing him the sum required.

"But she'd have fainted dead off before she had taken it for nothing!" said the station-master, as he retired to tell the success of his mission to the young doctor. If the two men had thoroughly enjoyed the preparation of that little impromptu meal, the girl passenger did equal justice to it.

She had scarcely eaten anything since the early morning, and had forgotten her sandwiches in the flurry of starting, while she had been too excited before to eat much breakfast.

When the station-master came in some time later the bread-and-butter and cake had disappeared, while a faint colour, as pretty as the blush of the wild rose, had stolen back into the pale cheeks.

"Thank you so much for thinking of me!" she said. "I feel ever so much better for the tea. But I am afraid," glancing doubtfully at the empty plates, and blushing like a school-girl, "are you sure it isn't anything more?"

"Lord, no, miss! You see," with cheerful mendaciousness, "Dr. Burton there, miss—he lives near where you are going—often has tea here when he's going back by train from seeing a distant patient, so as it is all there ready, it doesn't make the difference of more than a penny or two to me; my wife sends it up, you see."

The girl passenger felt very thankful that the doctor did require tea when waiting at Weybourne Station, and when some time later he strolled into the waiting-room she felt under a slight if unacknowledged obligation to him, and made an effort over her shyness to respond to his friendliness, when he commented on the weary length of their detention in the dreary, exposed station. But to her relief he did not stay long.

Yet there was something so pleasant and courteous in his manner that she suddenly found herself recalling the fact that the station-master had mentioned to her. After all she might make some pleasant acquaintance in that new, strange world to which she was travelling.

The local train came puffing into the station at last.

As, called by the station-master, she came out of the waiting-room, she saw the young doctor again on the platform. He was looking in another direction, a slight frown darkening his face.

The station-master had gone off to see her box put in the van, and making her way to the third-class compartments, she hastily decided on one that had only one occupant.

The young doctor, at that moment withdrawing his gaze from the first-class carriage which he had been watching, came quickly forward to open the door for her.

He lifted in her wraps, and raising his hat moved on to a first-class carriage, while the station-master came bustling up to wish her a pleasant ending to her cold journey. She felt quite sorry to see the last of his

honest, friendly face, and as the train moved on, she drew her shabby cloak closer about her, with a shiver of mingled mental excitement and physical chill, glancing as she did so at her fellow-traveller. It was a boy, apparently of about fourteen years of age.

## CHAPTER II.

THE wind seemed to gather fury as the train, at the usual pace of local railways, steamed through the darkness of the wild winter evening.

It drove the snow against the window-panes with such force, that in spite of closed windows the powdered flakes penetrated through the crannies of the fittings, and drifted into the carriage itself. It was a miserable third-class compartment, badly lit and generally comfortable.

As she glanced round, her eyes fell upon her fellow-passenger. The boy was sitting close up in his corner, on the same side of the carriage as herself, his face turned away from her, staring out through the window into the bolsterous night. He had been sitting like that when she entered, and as far as she had noticed, had not shifted his position, nor even looked round at the little bustle of her own entry.

The only movement he had made, apparently, was to take his left hand out of his pocket, in which it had been plunged when she first saw him, for it rested, now loosely doubled up, on the seat.

She would not have noticed this slight change in his pose, but for the whiteness and thinness of the hand catching her passing glance.

The comparative warmth of the interior of the carriage had caused a mist to overspread the panes of the window, so that with the night and driving snowstorm outside, it was impossible to see anything through the glass, and she wondered, with a feeble flicker of amusement, what interest the boy was finding on the other side of the blurred window-panes to keep him staring so stolidly out into the night. She even wondered if he felt as cold and comfortable as herself. He wore no overcoat, but was clad in a warm and comfortable-looking grey suit; not that of a working lad. Though she could not see his face, there was something about the figure and clothes which suggested the gentleman.

But her wondering curiosity was only passing. A moment or two later, numbed with cold, exhausted with the physical

fatigue and mental anxieties and fears of the past few days, she relapsed into a listless contemplation of her own affairs as they concerned the past and the future.

She was on her way to take up her first engagement as governess to a delicate child, the daughter of some rich people who lived on the borders of Derbyshire. The day before she had come up from a fishing village in Cornwall, where she had been living since she left school, two years before, with an invalid maiden aunt, the only surviving relation of whom she knew anything. Her aunt's home would have been hers as long as that good lady lived, but owing to a recent bank failure her aunt's income, barely enough to live on as it was, had been suddenly reduced to one-half, and it was impossible, not only for her niece to stay on there, but also for the invalid to procure the necessities her own delicate state of health required.

It was then that Leila Mallet had determined to make a living for herself, and do what she could to return some of the many benefits her aunt had conferred on her. When, suddenly and unexpectedly, she had heard of the appointment to take up which she was now on her way, the girl felt that a most unusual piece of good fortune had fallen to her share. The salary was far beyond her dreams. A small portion of it would suffice for her own wants, the rest would provide those alight luxuries which, in her aunt's delicate state of health, were absolute necessities.

The parting between the two had been a bitter one, and with the grief of the parting was the dread of a shy girl, unaccustomed to society; for since her sojourn under her aunt's roof, she had led a life as narrow and secluded almost as a nun's. This terror of shyness and nervous expectation heightened as the train carried her moment by moment nearer her destination, until at last it almost overpowered the sense of physical weariness and discomfort. Her overstrained nerves and brain were wrought up to a point of such intense excitement, as the train rushed through the black, tempestuous night, that the roar of the wind outside, the irregular rattling noises of the wheels, skurrying every few seconds into synchro-natic sound, to break again into hurried jarring, mingled with her doubts and fears, until at last the whole air about her seemed charged with an eerie excitement and presentiment of unknown peril. It needed all her self-control to force herself to sit there in

physical inaction, awaiting the fate that was coming to her.

It was just at the moment, when her nerves were strung to their fullest pitch, that some impulse, or some strange irresistible influence made her glance in the direction of the boy in grey.

He had stirred at last. His face was still averted, but he had moved nearer her. He was sitting now almost in the centre of the carriage, his hand still resting on the wooden seat, his arm slightly outstretched. But the thin white hand was no longer closed. The fingers had opened, and were moving in a slight, creeping movement, along the seat in her direction. Probably the unnatural tension of nerves and brain had something to do with it, but suddenly, as she looked at those slowly crawling fingers, a frantic terror and repulsion fell on her, an unspeakable consciousness of horrible peril, with which she was shut in there alone, cut off from all human help and protection by the black night, with its deafening roar of wind and fantastic noises of rushing wheels.

She must have made some sound as she sat staring at the creeping fingers, for the hand suddenly closed, resting idly once more on the seat. The boy, perhaps astonished at her stifled exclamation, glanced for an instant in her direction, then thrusting his hand, with an air of boyish impatience, as of the cold, into his pocket, he turned his face once more to the window.

Leila, though still thrilling with that

indescribable nameless terror, was already faintly conscious of the absurdity of it.

The wild, unreasonable paroxysm of terror had passed, and she forced herself to look again at her fellow-passenger. She saw only an ordinary-looking school-boy, with a fat, rather heavy face, dressed in grey, well-made clothes, who was apparently as cold and weary as herself.

She was on the point of making some remark to him, to forcibly expel the last lingering distrust, when the train pulled up with a sudden jerk that threw her forward. She thought an accident had happened, and under the influence of a new fright, as she recovered her equilibrium she sprang up and let down the window. The shouting of men's voices and the opening of windows confirmed her impression. Regardless of the wind that rushed shrieking into the compartment, driving the snow into her face, she leaned out to try and discover the cause of the sudden stoppage of the train.

She succeeded in attracting the notice of the guard as he hurried past with his lantern, in the direction of the engine.

"It's nothing, miss. No cause for alarm!" with hasty but kindly gruffness. And in truth, a minute or two later, before Leila had time to speak to any of the other passengers, one or two of whom had alighted from their carriages, the train began to move on. Pulling up the carriage window, and turning to resume her seat, she saw that she was alone.

The boy in grey had disappeared.

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## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

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(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hopsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XIII. FACE TO FACE.

AS the sudden grasp of a helping hand to a drowning creature, so was the grasp of the Sergeant's hand to Alison. Alone, dazed, pitilessly tossed hither and thither, all at once a friend stood by her side. She sobbed for thankfulness, and stood looking at him dumbly, with her grave, sad eyes; eyes scarce yet dry from the tears shed for little Patsey. Noise and riot still surged around them, and the Sergeant had to stretch out his strong arm to prevent her being crushed up against the wall of the passage; but she was conscious of no fear. If the entire strength of the Hundred and Ninety-Third, duly commanded by that prince of soldiers and most resolute of martinets, its Colonel, had suddenly appeared before her, she could not have enjoyed a more perfect inward peace of mind; nay—though she was not conscious of it—there was a great triumphant sense of joy underlying the peace. No doubt she would strive to stifle even the remembrance of such a feeling presently; but for the moment she let it buoy her up. Perhaps, she thought, the danger was more urgent than she understood. What else, indeed, could make her companion so deathly pale—even his lips showing white under the full sweep of his dark moustache! Anyway, she did not care. It would all come right in the end, and she should find herself safe and snug by Elsie's side in the cosy room at home. Yet this thought

brought with it a sudden pang, an anticipation of a coming desolation. Out in the night—out in the night—some one would be out in the night alone—separated from her, not only by material distance, but by that intangible yet insurmountable barrier of caste and class, which there is no over-getting. Truly, her safety and comfort would be dearly bought!

Thus was Alison happy in the low, dark, somewhat noisome cavern of the entry to an Irish shanty; which shows how little our outward surroundings have to do with our inward grace.

It did not seem as if the Sergeant exerted himself much, and yet the hustling hands and arms that were tearing wildly all round her, never touched her by as much as a hair's breadth.

"Wait a little, madam, and then when I move on, follow alongside between me and the wall."

She listened to the quiet voice, and no thought of dissent entered her mind. She just watched and waited, till the moment should come to do his bidding.

There was a lull, and the long-coated figure moved on quickly, Alison keeping step for step; her hand holding her cloak, from which the fastening had been torn away.

In another moment they were out in the narrow, crowded road, amid the flare and flicker of the torches. Then did fear steal into Alison's heart, and blanch her cheek; fear not for herself, but for the man who wore the Queen's uniform, and whose gait was unmistakeably that of the British soldier.

He looked neither to right nor left, and seemed to have but one object in view—to get the lady out of the crush and crowd that surged thicker and thicker



around them, as more and more half-frantic men and women came pouring up from Patrick Street, and over the bridge, in a living, seething stream. Twice, in spite of all he could do, Alison was separated from him, and carried away like a leaf swirled along by a torrent. Twice he had to fight his way to her, not unchallenged this time by threatening words and gestures.

"Now, thafe o' the world, step aside, an' let an honest man pass!" was not the pleasantest form of greeting possible, not to mention still more highly-flavoured ones; but the crowd were too much taken up with the one dominant idea of getting as near as possible to the front, to give much attention to the Queen's man and the Sassenach lady who followed in his wake. The long brown military overcoat, with its gilt fastening, is not so aggressive as the scarlet tunic; and, in any case, they really had no attention to spare. A spy of any species would have met with scant mercy at their hands; but they knew better than take the tall Sergeant for anything of that sort, being fully aware that he was only looking after his own men. Indeed, the policy of the authorities at this time was one of letting things alone as much as possible, and at the same time taking every precaution against friction or encounter between the soldiers and the disaffected civil population. As to these demonstrations in which coffins, torches, and tar-barrels played so prominent a part, they were doubtless a vent for feelings which, if pent up too closely, might have led to more mischief; hence, while utterly scouting the idea of any lurking disloyalty in the ranks of the Hundred and Ninety-Third, the Colonel took every conceivable precaution to guard against what Lieutenant Verrinder would describe as a "shindy" between any of the red-coats and the moonlighters. It was indeed a happy thing that he was in ignorance of Private Deacon's performances in the Minnymin line, and of the contraband knowledge possessed by Drummer Coghlan on that matter.

Still to Alison's ears came the far-off skirling cry of the fife, the roll of the drums, muffled by distance, and she knew that those six ghastly burdens were being still carried in gruesome state to the sound of the terrible death-march. Though the crowd had seemed to grow more dense, the torches were now few and far between,

casting a fitful glare here and there, sometimes cast down to spit and splutter on the ground, causing a rustle and swirl among those nearest; once almost drifting Alison off her feet, but the Sergeant, turning his back on the on-coming crowd, stood firm, and so, forming for her a sort of haven of refuge, enabled her to recover herself. He noticed that she was catching her breath a little, and a flickering torch showed her fair face paler than before. He took his courage in both hands—indeed, it needed a good deal of hard holding—and, after drawing a long breath, as one might who was about to take a deep plunge, he said, gently, yet with a certain masterfulness too reverent to hurt:

"Madam, I must ask you to accept the support of my arm. I cannot otherwise be responsible for your safety."

A soldier when on duty cannot uncover, not even in a house; and yet in some subtle way the Sergeant made Alison feel that he could not have more humbly sued for a pardon of their present attitude towards one another, had he knelt bare-headed at her feet.

She laid her hand softly within his arm. The fearful incongruity of the position in which she found herself struck her for a moment as bordering on the ludicrous. A flashing remembrance of Mrs. Musters came across her mind. If only that dear lady could see and know!

But these misgivings and reflections were cut short, and a wild confusion took their place. Her heart beat until she could feel its pulsations in her throat. She was glad the clasp of her cloak had been torn in the fray.

Poor Alison, she had prided herself upon her calmness, her entire mastery over herself. She had not counted upon the presence of the traitor within the citadel!

For, even at that slight contact, at the touch of the arm on which she leant so timidly, a strange thrill ran through her whole being, a something infinitely sweet, yet terrifying from its newness, the first pulsation of a passion that was destined to dominate her life. The hurtling crowd, the sea of upturned faces: some in shadow, some in the fitful flame of low-burning torches: seemed to be very far away. She did not feel those who pressed against her, as they fought wildly for place. The echo of the death-march had died away; some one a little way on

ahead struck up the chorus of "The Wearing of the Green":

Our flag shall wave on high, and our motto shall be  
seen,  
In spite of all our foes can do—the Wearing of the  
Green.

The rambling, hurrying footsteps fell into the rhythm and swing of the tune; it was taken up along the line, ringing out like a *feu de joie*:

The Wearing of the Green—the Wearing of the Green. . . .

A dreadful rebel song, of which not one word of meaning pierced her dazed brain, and yet which sounded like sweetest music to her ears.

She had gazed with a growing but unconscious passion of longing across a gulf that seemed impassable, and now, just for a little time—a precious, unspeakably precious time—the gulf was bridged over.

Still under the spell of the exaltation of those long hours of watching beside Patsey's bed, every emotion was accentuated, every nerve at its fullest tension.

It seemed to her as if each step she took along that crowded way were a step nearer to the time and place which would mean severance, and that eternal. An utterly exceptional succession of events had rendered certain things possible, that would quickly fall back into the region of the utterly impossible; that must die into a mere memory, if they did not, indeed, take the semblance of a story that is told, and a dream when one awaketh.

The present—the present—that was her "day," her own, her sweet possession. A miracle had happened; nothing less could have given her that one supreme hour, of which she had had no warning, but which had dropped into her lap like golden fruit from a heavenly tree; nothing else could have allowed of hand clasping hand and heart speaking to heart in that most complete of all isolations, the isolation possible in a crowd of indifferent fellow-creatures.

She was conscious—what woman is not conscious in such moments!—that the emotions in her own breast also filled that of her companion. She was not deceived by the stern, set face; the even, measured voice, in which the few absolutely needful words were uttered. That not one more than was absolutely needful was spoken may be taken for granted; and, mostly in absolute silence, the strong arm guarded her from the pressure of the crowd, upheld her if she stumbled on the rough, uneven road.

Oh, the wonder of it all to both, the strange sense of unreality, the bewildering sweetness! Even the silence seemed to speak more than any possible torrent of words.

They tell us that the long, sad, lonely day must come to an end, if we only wait long enough, but alas! the same truth applies to the short, sweet moments which earth, now and again, snatches from heaven on our behalf.

Allison felt that her "day" was coming to an end; that the last drops of those stolen waters that, as the wisest man that ever lived tells us, are so passing sweet, were moistening her thirsty lips.

The crowd grew less and less dense; the red flare of the torches fitful and far between. When one did blaze out it shone upon two white, set faces, with eyes full of despairing resignation.

Neither the man nor the woman whose story I am telling was a coward. Both were gathering their mental forces together to meet a coming crisis.

The Colour-Sergeant would have scorned to take a mean advantage of the woman thrown upon his protection in so exceptional and unlooked-for a manner; and now he knew that the moment of renunciation was near. No longer could any necessity exist for a protecting arm.

His breath came quickly; a shiver passed over his whole frame, then—he dropped the hand whose gentle touch had thrilled him through and through with a rapture that was almost pain; bowed, as though to acknowledge the trust that had been reposed in him, and would have fallen a little behind; but, with an imperious gesture, Allison bade him keep by her side.

She was having the best of the struggle, for she had seen his agitation, and her own feelings were forgotten in a flood of pity for his. It is only the highest type of woman who is capable of entire self-effacement, but of this noble type our heroine was one. Heaven only knows how she kept her outward calm so perfect, her voice so soft, and low, and even, as she spoke of the choir-boys and the difficulties to be met with in the management of their voices. She was acting as thoroughly as if she were behind the footlights and facing an audience; acting well, too, for effort was hidden. There is something in a woman's love that holds an element of motherhood; something that longs to help and comfort, that shrinks from the sight of suffering in

the one beloved ; something that bestows an immense power for the trampling down of self.

"What shall I do—what shall I do," Alison kept saying in her troubled heart, "to make it easier to him ?"

But as the solitude of night grew around them, words became harder. The trailing shadows of the trees met and stirred gently at their feet ; overhead, a pale watery moon came shimmering out from the ragged edge of a cloud. The noise of the now far distant crowd was like the purling of a stream, while here and there a bird twittered in its sleep.

They were nearing the river, where the thick boughs bent to the dark water, and one single spot of light told of a reflected moon. The spell of the gentle sounds, and the solitude of the moon-flecked night, came upon Alison Drew—her will was in abeyance.

It is, indeed, probable that neither she nor her companion could have told you how they came to be standing side by side by the whispering river, under the shadow of the drooping trees. It is quite certain they had left the high-road ; equally certain that the model non-commissioned officer of the Hundred and Ninety-Third Regiment had forgotten that he was that night on "special duty."

He never asked Alison to take that winding pathway to the river ; it seemed that they had blundered blindly on in a silence perilous, passion-laden ; he drunk with the sense of her nearness—a nearness that might never be again—she dominated by his unspoken will, as truly bewitched as though "Divel" Maloney herself had woven the spell !

Of the outward impropriety of her action Alison never once stopped to think. There is that about some men which effectually prevents a woman standing on the defensive ; she feels instinctively she has no need to do so ; she lets herself go with the conviction of absolute safety. How still it was, save for the soft swirl of the river at their feet, the rustle of the whispering leaves above their heads !

The little birds that every now and then stirred in the branches, the sleek water-rat that slipped into the ripples and crossed to the other side—himself a ripple in the faint and broken moonlight—these heeded them not.

They were absolutely alone, and the beating of their own hearts were as the pulses of the night itself.

The Sergeant leaned his back against a tree, folded his arms—maybe to guard against their becoming mutinous—pushed back his forage-cap from his brow, and turned his gaze full upon his companion. Through the grey light he met her grave, sweet eyes, out of which looked a steadfast and noble soul.

Something between a laugh and a sob broke from his lips.

There is a point at which things become so despairing and so impossible that their impossibility shows a ghastly ludicrousness, like the grin on the face of a murdered man.

They were there alone in the quiet night, and yet they could not have been farther apart had seas betwixt them rolled.

The bitter irony of this paradox struck the man like a blow from an open hand—a blow beneath which he quivered.

He had deliberately stolen the sweetness of this interview—a thing to which he had no manner of right. He had done this thing deliberately ; he deserved to be tied to the triangles and lashed, as poor Deacon was for a lesser sin ; for what he had done ; but yet the sin was sinned, and he meant to have all the sweetness of it—ay, and the memory of it to hoard up as stored honey in a hive, to taste in the dreary years to come.

Just as she stood there, with the fitful light touching her face into exquisite beauty and tenderness ; looking—not as another woman would look, fluttered, angry, outraged, and indignant—but steadfast, gentle, even wistful, her attitude expressive of patient waiting for that from which she did not shrink, because she did not fear that which was true ; just like that he would think of her. No fear that the picture would fade—no fear, no fear—the colours were quite fast.

There was something ecstatic in her stillness ; a hint of Galatea, just at the moment when her marble breast began to soften, rise, and fall. She was full of grace, dignity, and expectancy.

"What life would be," thought the man who watched her with hungry, sorrowful eyes, "lived with such a woman !" Perfect companionship mingled with the sharper joys of passion, the delicious sense of possession ; a sympathy that could never fail, a tenderness that could never cloy ! What was he that he should dare to have such fancies ?

When he spoke his voice was well under command, yet told of a supreme effort.

"Madam, I have done you a wrong in bringing you here; will you, before I try to further justify myself, say that I have your pardon?"

Alison bent her head in token of assent. Of words found she none. Everything about her seemed unreal. The soft voices of the night were as the murmurs of a dream; the river, sobbing in little rippling wavelets at her feet, had to speak for her.

But he understood. He knew that no anger against him found place in that gentle heart; he almost fancied for a moment there was more than gentle toleration in the look she turned upon him; but he drew a long breath and cast that notion aside. When you had a certain duty to do, it was as well to keep your head as clear as might be.

"Do you know," the Sergeant went on, still speaking in that even, laboured voice, "that I have been—mad? I have seemed sane enough to those about me, no doubt, but, under it all, this long while back, almost ever since first I saw your face, I have been—mad. And this madness of mine grows; it has filled all my life, and now I am going to do the only thing that an honest man can—I am going to run away from a spell that is too strong for me. A strange thing, truly, for a soldier to talk of running away, isn't it?" he added, with a bitter smile. "But there are some dangers for which flight is the only safety—the only thing possible."

"Yes."

Alison had found her tongue now; or rather it seemed as if some one else's were speaking for her, since the voice sounded strangely unlike her own.

"You had heard that I was going?"

"Yes."

"And you think it wise—right—the best thing for me to do?"

"Yes."

There certainly was a monotony in her replies; and the man might be excused for grinding his heel into the soft, mossy ground, and smothering some quite allowable word in his moustache.

"Well, we have settled that point; and now, madam—you know that a condemned criminal is permitted to have anything he asks for—grant me the same indulgence."

"Tell me what I can do."

Alison laid a slight—very slight—emphasis upon the "can," which was not lost upon her hearer. For the first time his voice faltered.

"Give me one thing to take away with me; give me the assurance that—I have your forgiveness—that my daring has not hopelessly angered you against me; tell me that you will not think of me with scorn and contempt!"

"No—no—no!"

The words seemed to break from her whether she would or no.

"You will only remember the small service I have been able to render you to-night—the helping hand that touched yours in the moment of need—the—oh, my God! you will only need to remember that I loved you, as the pilgrim loves the shrine, and then—you will forgive me—everything."

"Everything."

What a sad little echo of his words! More like a sob than a word.

Somewhere, on the high ground above them, where a light from a window glistened through the trees, a fiddle was shrieking, and its acrid, plaintive cry was as the cry of their own hearts.

"After all," said the Sergeant, taking a step nearer to her, and reading her face by the soft radiance that touched it into such spiritual, unearthly beauty; "after all, I have not done you any harm. After all, I am a man, and you are a woman, and I have dared to love you. Now that you have pardoned me, my sin seems small compared with what it did. Ah! you are going—out of my life for ever. Madam, forgive me if my words are wild—they are the last of mine that you will ever hear. If you stood by me, and I were dying, you would forgive me all; forgive me now."

"Indeed—indeed—I do."

There was a sound of tears in her voice that maddened him.

The violence of despair came over him; words rose to his throat, strangling him. He had counted so thoroughly on his own strength, and now it was failing him—failing him utterly, as the conviction grew that in a moment or two more he would be standing alone under the rustling leaves, with the river sobbing at his feet, and the fiddle keening in the distance—alone, with the moonlight kissing the place where she had stood.

But he mastered himself fiercely, clenching his hands upon his arms, while great drops of sweat beaded on his temples, where the crisp, waving hair fell away between the fine points that marked the contour of the brow.

"Take my life—my life!" he cried, and his voice was like a cry of pain, "my life—only give me one word—one single word of kindness to look back upon."

The tears were streaming down Alison's face, though she did not know it; she stretched out her hands to him.

He dared not touch them lest he should be tempted to do more. He even turned aside from the sight of them. Not for a moment would he let himself forget her position and his; but his heart was wrung within him, and the tears gathered and fell.

"Heaven bless you," said Alison. "Heaven keep you—wherever you may go. I shall always think of you kindly—and see—do this one thing for me—there is a Soldiers' Evening coming—do not sing—'Bid me good-bye'—I could—not—bear—it."

A moment more and she was gone. Her light foot made no sound upon the mossy ground. It was to him as if a spirit had passed from earth, leaving a radiance behind—a radiance that should be eternal.

But the thought that she had herself evoked, haunted Alison on her solitary way. It seemed as if her feet scarce touched the ground; she was flying from herself; yet ringing in her ears came the sad, sweet refrain:

Bid me good-bye, good-bye, love,  
Bid me good-bye, good-bye!

The fiddle in the house on the hill was playing it—by what strange freak of fate, who may say?

She could have put her fingers in her ears to deaden the sound; it pursued her:

What though our pathways sever,  
Never again to meet;  
Still will your memory linger  
Ever around me, sweet.  
Bid me good-bye, good-bye, love,  
Bid me good-bye, good-bye.

"Never again to meet—never again—never again," that was the whole story.

Her eyes were blind with tears; her feet stumbled; there was a whirring sound in her overstrained brain; and, thus sobbing and stumbling, she fell right into the arms of Dr. Musters!

"Bless us and save us all! what's this?" he cried, holding her with a strong arm, and peering into her face. "Why, Miss Alison, out alone at this time of night? My dear, what is the matter?"

"I had been down in the valley with the child Patsey; he is dead now—dead

with a smile on his face—and then—I got among the crowd—and—it was hard to make my way. I was going to Mrs. Musters—for, you see—I could not very well go—home—now."

The doctor was a wise man, and knew the signs of an overwrought state of nerves. With a few kindly words he led the girl on towards Monte Notte, telling her of the strange chance that brought him out that night, and making believe not to see how she caught her breath, and swayed every now and then.

"Confound them all, with their bands and their coffins, and Heaven knows what beside," he muttered under his breath—"frightening the lassie this way, and making fools of themselves into the bargain, a lot o' haverin' deils, when all's said and done."

There was Mrs. Musters dutifully sitting up for her lord, and much amazed at his return with the wandering lamb he had found astray in the shadows of the night.

Also, to her great bewilderment, when she spoke a kind word or two to Alison, that young woman incontinently flung herself upon her knees, and laid her head prone in the speaker's ample black satin lap.

Now we know that the doctor's wife had a bitter tongue, and an interfering way that wrought much ill in the regiment to which she belonged, but somewhere about her she carried a true woman's heart, for she took the girl in her arms, made a sign to the perturbed doctor to go away and leave them together, and set to work to cosset and comfort her, without asking her a single question.

## SLANG.

How many people are there who have never used slang? A writer in a recent issue of an American magazine suggests that to a person of good breeding, of innate good taste, slang is, to all intents and purposes, impossible. If this is so, one may venture on the sequential observation that there is, practically, not one person of good taste at present existing in the world. There is certainly no such person in any sort of business, for this sufficient reason that every business, every trade, and every profession, has a slang of its own. Lawyers, doctors, soldiers, sailors, even clergymen, have all their slang, their, so to speak,

cant phrases. Whether politics is a trade or a profession may be a matter of doubt; there can be no doubt whatever that a compendium of political slang would make a fair-sized pamphlet. Think of the slang of "the City"—it is a slang phrase which I have placed between the inverted commas, and who does not speak of "the City"?—the slang of "Capel Court"—slang again!—of all the various exchanges, of the banks, of the warehouses, of the factories, of the docks, of the markets, of the sale-rooms, of "the Row"—slang!—of all the resorts in which men meet together to buy and to sell, to earn their bread.

There is the slang of the writer. "Slatting," "padding," "copy," "log-rolling," "fleshy school," "penny-a-lining," "decadents," "Ibsenites," "Shelleyites," "Browningsites," hundreds of other "ites." Is there a literary man or woman, I care not whether in "Grub Street" or on "Parnassus," in "the gutter" or among "the elect," who can place his or her hand upon his or her heart, and solemnly protest that not one of the thousand slang words and phrases of which these are samples never escaped his or her lips? There is the slang of the artist. Indeed, the artist has not only more than his proper share of slang, but, to my thinking, the larger portion of it cannot put forth even the faintest claim to existence. Slang words and phrases can, as a rule, advance at least one argument in proof of their having a right to live; they are expressive. They "supply a want"—slang!—they "crystallize" a great deal of meaning in a small amount of space. Artistic slang, on the contrary, is apt not so much to convey a meaning, as to conceal the want of one—it is pointless, meaningless.

The less a man knows of art—and the longer one lives the more one wonders how much there really is to know—the more he resorts to the use of slang to enable him to conceal his ignorance. Listen to the conversation of A. and B. at a picture-gallery; A. not knowing less of art than B. only because the thing would be impossible. They are decent fellows, both of them, "'varsity" men. Bishops, not impossibly, Privy Councillors, "great guns," men of "light and leading." They come to a masterpiece by Jones: "Wonderful 'technique,'" says A. "Yes," returns B, "and look at the 'middle distance.'" "Rather 'painty.'" "Perhaps, a trifle, but a grand 'scheme of colour.'" "There's no doubt he is a 'colourist.'" "It is marvellous, too, how he 'manages his lights.'" "The whole thing's so 'sympathetic.'" "Exactly, though a little 'out of drawing,' I fancy, here and there." "Think so? The 'brush work,' in particular, is very fine." "What I like about Jones is that his 'half-tones' are always so subdued." "Ye-es, his 'half-tones' would be subdued, wouldn't they?" A. looks furtively at B. and smiles, and each of those men knows, in his heart of hearts—and knows that the other knows it too!—that he has been talking nonsense, and falling back on slang to make it sound like sense.

Mr. Brander Matthews, who is the writer of the article to which allusion has been made, attempts, more than once in the course of it, to give us a definition of slang. Not one of his definitions seems exactly "to cover the ground"—I have never lighted upon one which did. I certainly have none to offer. If the compilers of the new English dictionary were required to produce a work which should only contain words of classic correctness, and not one single word of slang, I fancy that the task would be beyond their powers. When it was produced what sport it would provide for the reviewers! It becomes plainer every day that philologists themselves are not to be relied upon when they set themselves up as authorities on slang. The subject bristles with difficulties, there are pitfalls on every side. For instance, it has been recently shown that many so-called "Americanisms," presumably slang words and phrases which are current in "the States," are either reversions to, or survivals of, the "well of English, undefiled."

The person one sometimes meets who glibly defines slang as the "language of the streets," talks rubbish. He would be much nearer the mark if he defined it as the language of the people—not one particular set or class of people, but of all the people of the world. Listen to a general conversation among educated men and women, and make a note of all the slang—the unconscious slang—they utter in the course of half an hour; to do the thing successfully will necessitate your being an expert phonographer. Or better still, constrain such a company to use no slang—how the conversation would drag and falter! They would find themselves incapable of giving adequate expression to half the ideas they have in their heads.

For some reason which to me is inscrutable

table, in the minds of many persons slang seems inevitably linked with vulgarity. I would respectfully suggest that such persons confuse cause and effect. When Benjamin Disraeli said, on a memorable occasion, that he was "on the side of the angels," he used a slang phrase; but was he vulgar? Burns continually uses slang—is he often vulgar? Most, if not all of our poets have been addicted to the use of slang. Pope was a master of slang; so were Byron and Browning. One can point here and there to more than a suspicion of slang in the works of that great artist in language, Tennyson. Matthew Arnold is regarded by many as a purist, a stylist. However that may be, he was remarkable for nothing more than for his gift of inventing effective slang. He bequeathed to us a slang sense of a word which the world will not willingly let die—"Philistine." And how about his famous slang phrase, "sweetness and light"? There is an amazing slang of religion. But is a man necessarily vulgar because he calls himself a "hard-shell Baptist," or speaks of Brown as a "sprinkler"? Quaker, Methodist, Shaker, Ranter, nearly all the names of all the sects were originally slang—who is bold enough to call them vulgar? When we speak of "broad," "low," or "high" churchman—"broad," "low," and "high" in that connection are all three slang words—are we vulgar, necessarily?

Let us discriminate—there is a slang, the use of which, at least, suggests questionable taste, or indifferent breeding. There is the slang of the "Arry." "Arry" itself is slang. When a man talks of his "mash," we take it for granted that he is possibly not a person of the highest intellectual calibre. When a girl talks of her "fellow," we conclude that she is scarcely of the caste of Vere de Vere. How about "old chappie" or "Johnny," in the sense of "a regular Johnny." These expressions sound vulgar, or worse, inane to us, perhaps because they are feebly coined. I do not think that all of us who say "How are you, old fellow?" or "Glad to have seen you, old man," are either fools or "cads"—which latter word again is slang. There is a slang of "the depth." When you hear a man speak of another as "an lkey cove," you look after your pockets. Should you chance to overhear a gentleman confide to his friend that he has been "doing a drag" or "time," or "fetching a lagging," you hurry off to get your watch safe home. But though there is a slang which, when

we hear him use it, "gives a man away," or still more a woman, we are all of us, from the Queen on her throne to the gentleman who signs himself "Cantuar," or to that most august of personages, the Chancellor of a University, constrained, not only every day but every hour of our lives, to the use of slang, which has, and from the very nature of things can have, nothing objectionable about it of any sort or kind.

It is not the use of slang which is to be deprecated, it is the abuse of it. The girl who, every time she opens her mouth, projects from it some such word as "awfully"—"awfully nice," "awfully horrid," "awfully square," "awfully round," and so on, until you wish that she would, at any rate, advance into the alphabet as far as the *bs*—is not only a slangy person, she is, also, in all human probability, a fool. The same civil observation applies to the man who has become indissolubly joined to some slangy catch phrase, as, for instance, "Don't you know?"—"He's a nice fellow, don't you know," "It seems to me to be a queer start, don't you know," "I can't stand clever people, don't you know." We quite realise the truth of his last statement without his putting himself to the trouble of giving it audible utterance, just as clearly as we surmise that it is just possible that clever people can't stand him.

There are two sides to a question. If there are three persons together, and two of them happen to be "talking shop," and that "shop" is not yours, you are apt to think that the use of slang ought to be prohibited by Act of Parliament. If you, a non-speculative person, taking no interest of any sort in the fluctuations of stocks and shares, chance to be in the society of two members of the "House" who are talking "Stock Exchange," you are likely to conclude, before their conversation is finished, that it was by no means necessary to have built a Tower of Babel to have produced a confusion of tongues. On the other hand, if you are a member of the "House," and it is you who are talking "Stock Exchange," you will almost be ready to affirm that only man in the highest stage of his development could have invented slang, and that without it all the fountains of speech would be closed. The "environment" of a trade or of a profession alters from day to day; new conditions arise, unsuspected developments—the work of creation, as it were, is con-

tinually going on. It is essential that one's vocabulary should keep pace with one's requirements; it needs continually renewing if it is to be "up to date," accurate, definitive; it has to express shades of meaning which are distinct to you, an expert, but which to an outsider are without form and void. Hence it is necessary not only that the business or the professional man should have his slang, but that that slang should alter with the needs and with the requirements of every day.

Again, there is sporting slang, the slang of our games: how would some of our pastimes get on without their slang? One's maiden aunt might possibly be puzzled if one were to tell her that Humphreys is a wily "trundler," and that his "deliveries" are apt to "stump" the batsman. Or that Lockwood was dreadfully "punished," in fact "knocked all over the field," for his "first" was "snicked" for "a single," his "second" was "cut" for two, his "third" was "slipped" for three, his "fourth" was "put to leg" for "ditto," while his "fifth" was "swiped" for a "boundary"; and if you don't call that "the willow getting more than even with the leather," what may be your ideas of the difference between a "maiden" and an "expensive over"? I say that our unmarried aunt might be somewhat puzzled, and even shocked, if such an observation were addressed to her, but how could a cricketer explain himself more clearly to a kindred spirit? Some time ago I was at "Lord's." Behind me sat a cleric who is high in favour with the "Evangelicals." A "catch" was "badly mulled" in the "long field." "Oh, papa!" exclaimed the cleric's daughter, "what do you think of that?" "Fairly buttered," growled her sire. And so it was, however convinced Mr. Brander Matthews may be that it is impossible for slang to proceed from the lips of a man of breeding.

Football has its slang in abundance; so has golf; so have tennis, rowing, swimming, running. If we are to use no slang, we shall have to abandon all those pastimes which are amongst the most characteristic features of the "end of the century." Consider whist. If you watch four experts playing a rubber, you will not, it is true, hear much conversation, but nearly all you do hear will be slang. And billiards; it has a language all its own, and an expressive language it, for the most part, is. Think of the slang of the hunting-field, of

the "shootist," of the "fishist," of that quaint slang with which the air is filled in the "climbing season" in the regions round Zermatt.

I repeat that it is not the use of slang which is to be deprecated, it is the abuse of it. And yet it is difficult to lay down a hard and fast line which shall define where use ends and abuse begins. For my part, I am inclined to the opinion that the use of "back slang" is to be deprecated. Though I am conscious that the "coaster" may maintain that he is to the full as much entitled to the use of "back slang" as I am, say, to the use of golfing slang, I am not altogether clear as to what line of argument I had better take to convince him of his error. I might point out to him that the use of back slang convicted him of the heinous offence of belonging to "the masses"—Mr. Gladstone's slang!—while golfing slang was a trade mark of "the classes." Unfortunately, I entertain a suspicion that if I did point that out, the immediate effect would be to incline him to the use of back slang still more. Back slang is a language constructed on lines—I venture to hint illogical lines—of its own. The initial idea is that all words are to be pronounced backwards; for instance, instead of saying "no" you say "on," for "bad man" you say "dab nam." But you have not proceeded far before you find that the initial idea breaks down. "Penny," reversed, would be "ynnep," the back slangster says "yennup." "Evg em a yennup" is his version of "Give me a penny." "Doog gin" is, according to him, "good night"; "Ekil a nird," he says to his "lap" ("pal"), or "anod" ("dona"), when he is offering a drink. It would be impossible for an English tongue to pronounce many of our words backwards. How would you pronounce "night" or "drink" backwards, leaving the spelling as it is? not to speak of more difficult examples. The result is that the "back slangster" adopts not only an arbitrary spelling, but also an arbitrary pronunciation of his own. To hear two or three of these proficientes in the art—if you know where to look for them, they abound—carrying on a conversation between themselves, would fill a "West End Johnny" with despair. The amusing part of the business would be that the coaster would look with as much contempt, and even horror, upon the "Johnny's" slang as the "Johnny" would look on theirs.



Thieves' slang is, if one may be permitted to say so, also a necessity of their particular trade or profession. The naked truth—in other words, plain English—is unpalatable even to them. In the innocence of my heart I once nearly had a "row royal" with a sturdy vagabond in a "fourpenny doss." I had "stood" him a drink, and, so far as I could judge, we were on terms of excellent good fellowship. "You're a tramp, aren't you?" I knew that he was a tramp, and had been a tramp for years; it never occurred to me for a moment to suppose that he would object to the fact being mentioned. "A what?" an expression came over his face which rather startled me. "Look 'ere, don't you go calling me no bloomin' names, I'm a traveller." "I see." I ought to have understood that there was a standard of manners even in a "doss house," but I went on. "And by profession you're a beggar?" That sturdy vagabond rose from his seat, and brought his fist down upon the table with a bang. "S'elp me, if you come playing them games with me, I'll knock a 'ole in yer—don't you call me a beggar! I'll let you know I ain't no beggar, I'm 'an asker,' that's what I am." The same feeling which prompted that sturdy vagabond to prefer a phraseology of his own is, possibly, one of the reasons why professional felons, in talking to each other, consider it almost a point of honour to use slang.

A thief seldom says that he robs—he "nicks," or "snatches," or even "prigs." Just as one sort of gentleman may be an "asker" but not a "beggar," so another sort may "prig" but scarcely "steal." A thief is not a thief to a thief—he is "on the cross." There is no prison for him, only "stir." He is not sent to jail—he "does time." Not for a month, but for a "moon"; not for three months, but for "a drag"; not for a year, but for a "stretch." He is not a passer of counterfeit coin—he is a "snide pitcher." He is not a common swindler—he "rings the changer." He never effects a burglarious entry into a house—he "puts it up." He does not plunder unprotected little children as they are passing alone through the streets—not he!—he is "on the kinchin lay."

Although, as has been said before, the person who defines slang as "the language of the streets" talks rubbish, there is a slang of the streets, just as there is a slang of the drawing-room. There is this to be

said of the slang of the streets, that he, or she, who uses it does not use so much a particular set of words as a peculiar style of speech; an exactly similar remark, as will be seen a little further on, may be made of the slang of the drawing-room. "D'ye 'ear!" cries an urchin at the street corner to his friend. "'E ses to me, 'Wot yer take me for?' I ses, 'Gar on!' 'E says, 'You fancies yourself, I should think.' I ses, 'Who's yer mother!' Then he looks at me as if he was going to eat me, and he starts off whistling, 'Dysy! Dysy!' and he 'ooks it off—there's more outside of 'im then there is inside, that's wot I say." If you examine this sentence you will perceive that it contains only one slang word—"ooks"—and yet surely, as a whole, it is slang in excelsis.

The slang, of which we hear so much, of the cabdrivers and the 'busmen, does not consist, even chiefly, of strange or surprising words, coined in a mint of their own. Quite the contrary; you will find that the Jehus of the London streets use ordinary words, but they use them in a strange and a surprising manner. "Left somethink, haven't yer?" asks the driver of your 'bus of the driver of the 'bus in front of you. "Yes," retorts the rival "whip," looking round, shaking his hand in the air, "left you—I'm sorry for you, 'cause it ain't your fault, I know." "Ab, you've left somethink else besides—you've left your driving at home, haven't yer, or haven't you got none to bring? What are you doing on that seat? Here, p'lice-man, here's a man a-driving what's never seen a horse before, he's a-trying to take his coach and 'orses right through the middle of my omnibus, and thinks I'll never notice it." "I say, old man, talk about my having never seen a horse before, I should think you haven't never seen a horse what wasn't before. I should say you've always been about a couple of mile behind anything that ever went on two feet, let alone on four. Go on 'ome! Drive a funeral!—why, the corpse'd get to the grave before you did! Bank! Bank! Good-bye, old 'un, I daressay I'll find you just a starting when I come back! I say, policeman, why don't you take this man's number, he's been three weeks a-bringing of hisself along the Strand!" That is the sort of slang you hear in the London streets, all day long, every day in the week, all the weeks in the year. Vulgar, not a doubt of it, but, as has been said, it is the idiom which is slangy, rather than

the actual words; and, vulgar or not, if you encounter two smart practitioners you will be likely to hear something which has almost a nodding acquaintance with wit.

If the slang of the streets is vulgar—which is granted—what of the slang of the drawing-room? In how many drawing-rooms is some such remark as this being made every day of every year: "Thank you so much, Miss Montmorenci, it was perfectly charming. So good of you! Sure you didn't mind? Much too sweet of you, really!" Is not this italicised, adverbial, adjectival sort of observation quite as much slang as the slang of the streets, which is not so vulgar only because it is more idiotic? Listen to the fashionable young lady of the period, Lady Gwendolen Vere de Vere, speaking in the "smartest," most "exclusive" house "in town." "It was an awful lark! He's so frightfully screaming, don't you know. I thought I should have died—fact!" And young Lord Adolphus Grandseigneur in reply: "He is a caution; but I've had a sickener of the chap. He's all very well the first time of asking, but I think he's a bit of a rotter, don't you know." Lady Gwendolen and Lord Adolphus continue in this strain until the conversation finishes. The one picture is no more overdrawn than the other. Put their conversation and the busmen's in parallel columns, and say which you prefer.

Slang is almost universal. With all due deference to Mr. Brander Matthews, we are all of us, whether well-bred or ill-bred, if we mingle with our fellows, practically compelled to use slang of some sort or other every day of our lives. Do let us discriminate. Because an ill-bred man uses slang it does not follow that all who use slang are ill-bred men. One might almost as reasonably say that, because an ill-bred man eats, all men who eat are birds of his feather. Owing to the exigencies of the situation one must use slang. Those who make the contrary assertion can scarcely be aware of what slang is, of its myriad feelers which stretch through the body religious, social, commercial, politic; but we are very far from being compelled to use the slang of the blackguard or the fool. Some use it less than others. Some, unconsciously plagiarising Molière, use it without being conscious of what it is they are using. Some have it, of malice prepense, continually in their mouths, and yet are well-bred men. It is very much a question of temperament — as so many things are questions of temperament. The

Quaker is content with yea and nay. Others, as clean-mouthed as the Quaker, but of more sanguine complexion, use not only monosyllables, but sometimes polysyllables, and still search their vocabularies for more. If a man were to assure me seriously, clearly realising what it was that he was saying, that he never used slang, I am inclined to think that I should look at him askance; I should be disposed to suspect that he was almost too cold-blooded to be human.

The truth is that many persons who flatter themselves that they are well educated, and who have, at least, had an expensive education, do not know slang when they see it, or, for the matter of that, when they hear it either. I called a lady's attention to the article in that American magazine. She read it. She thought it excellent; she approved of every word Mr. Brander Matthews had written. His only fault was that he did not go far enough, was not adjectival enough for her. "I can't stand slang," she said. Perceiving that I regarded her askance, she added with emphasis, "I loathe it!" She was indignant when I suggested that such a sentence as "I can't stand slang" was slangy; and that, in the sense of being slangy, "I loathe it" was almost worse.

#### AN AUTUMN EVE.

WHEN o'er the cloud-bar grim and grey  
That shuts too soon the west in night,  
The last faint ripples of the light  
Break in soft flecks of rosy spray;  
When all the winds have sunk to sleep,  
And not one golden leaf is stirred,  
Nor note of one belated bird  
Mars the great silence gathering deep;  
As slowly through the autumn haze  
Of mellow woodlands autumn pight,  
Slow-moving trails of misty white  
Come creeping from the watery ways,  
From those high isles of rose-flecked foam  
A warmth upon the landscape falls,  
Like firelight in ancestral halls,  
And lights it with a light of home.  
And all my senses, fainting, seem  
To mingle with the silent land.  
As for a moment's gaze I stand  
Amid the dreams, myself a dream.

#### ONLY JACK.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

"I TELL you, Susie, I would do anything to annoy him—anything in reason, you know. He is simply the most self-contained, unimpressable man I ever met; and I tried to impress him, I did, indeed."

"I've no doubt you did," Susie replied, with sisterly frankness. "And you failed, you say? Well, never mind, it isn't the first time."

"Susie," Connie said impressively, "I never tried so hard in my life, only to fail in the end. I stayed for a week in the same house with him, and people knew—they knew, I tell you! He was very courteous—oh, maddeningly courteous—but he wasn't one bit impressed by my attentions; he wasn't even flattered by them. Yet, goodness knows, they were marked enough."

"Yours usually are," and Susie smiled. "Don't you remember Major Barton, and the Venners' picnic? You made yourself quite remarkable on that occasion, and yet nothing came of it. I've always told you it was bad form."

"It's bad form of him to be so ungrateful, and I'll pay him out for it yet. You see if I don't!" she said vindictively.

"Why do you want to flirt with him?"

"Because no one has ever succeeded in flirting with him yet. Isn't that reason enough?"

"Quite, I should say. And do you expect to be more successful in your efforts to annoy him?"

"Yes, I do."

"But how?"

"That, my dear Susie, is my affair."

"I couldn't understand your sudden affection for that child before, but if she is this man's ward——"

"Yes!" as Susie paused significantly.

"Don't be hard on her, she's a nice little thing."

"I'm not hard on her," with a disdainful smile; "on the contrary, I'm her best friend."

"Oh! She didn't seem very cheerful after you sent her to call on him the other day."

"No."

"Perhaps her visit annoyed him?"

"It is quite possible."

"Or perhaps he didn't like her going over there with Jack?"

"That, also, is possible."

"Yet it was only Jack; if it had been any other—and he is old enough to be her father!"

"Who? Jack?"

"No, no; Colonel Leigh."

"Quite old enough," with a cold smile, "but not, perhaps—in his own opinion—too old to be her husband."

"What? Are they engaged, then?"

"There is a sort of understanding, I fancy; or perhaps it would be better described as a misunderstanding."

"But you did not tell us this?"

"Why should I? It's their affair, not ours; and she never mentions it."

"You'd better let them alone, Connie."

"I think I shall—now."

She was looking from the window as she spoke, and a faint smile played about her handsome mouth; for she saw two figures pacing up the lawn side by side, and recognised them even at that distance. Yes, Colonel Leigh would probably be very much annoyed before all was over; but oh, what a pity it was only Jack!

"And what if Jack should mean business!—for really, you know, it looks rather like it."

Susie, too, had come over to the window, and was drawing her own conclusions from what she saw there.

"No such luck, my dear. Jack isn't a marrying man."

"Look! Do you want him to marry, then?"

"No; but there would be compensations. We should live in town then, instead of this dull, out-of-the-way place. But don't be anxious, Susie. It will all end in smoke as far as he is concerned."

"And she?"

"That, you must acknowledge, is her affair, not mine," Constance said carelessly, as she turned from the window.

Meantime the young people themselves—all unconscious of Constance's plots and schemes—were rapidly progressing in each other's good graces, and for a short space Colonel Leigh, and all his claims to consideration and respect, were forgotten. Yet he was coming to the dance that very evening, and in another hour or two Minnie knew that those severe eyes would be upon her, and she would be called to account for all her present happiness. It was not a pleasant prospect to contemplate, so the poor child steadily averted her eyes from it, and enjoyed the present moment with a reckless disregard of consequences very unusual in her gentle nature. Perhaps she, too, thought it was "only Jack," and therefore would not greatly matter.

Time passed on all too quickly, however—as is usually the case when we especially desire to delay its progress—and soon Minnie had to hurry indoors to dress for the dance.

How much she wished there wasn't going to be a dance at all, but just a

pleasant, quiet evening with only the house-party; an evening when everybody would be free to stroll about the garden in the deepening twilight, listening to the thrushes' melodious even-song; or to sit on the terrace, watching the moon rise slowly from behind the dusky trees, while—perhaps—some one else strolled or sat there, too, and seemed in no haste to go in. Such an evening, in fact, as the two last had been—evenings unlike any she had known before; and never, never to be forgotten, whatever new experiences the future might have in store for her.

But—this was the night of the dance, and Colonel Leigh was coming, would be here almost immediately: Colonel Leigh, who had always been so kind to her, and whom it was her duty to respect, and—by-and-by—to love! Had not her mother always told her this? Had she not urged her to remember it almost with her dying breath? "I wronged him," she had said, "it is for you to make amends. He has promised to make you his wife, Minnie, and I wish you to marry him; remember, I have no dearer wish in the world than this. You are too young yet, but by-and-by he will ask you, and you must say yes—for his sake, and your own!"

Two years had passed since then, and Minnie was now eighteen; but Colonel Leigh had not asked her yet, nor had he even troubled himself to see very much of her of late. She lived with an old governess, and an extremely quiet, not to say dull, life it was; for she had few friends, and the old lady did not approve of her visiting those she had. Miss Fremley had known something of the Myersons years ago, and had therefore consented to make an exception in their favour, and allow her young charge to accept the invitation Constance had given her; though, had she known the kind of woman she was, Constance Myerson would assuredly have been the last friend she would have chosen for Minnie. In point of fact, she knew nothing of her; and great would have been the poor old lady's dismay could anybody have enlightened her comfortable ignorance. Fortunately for her peace of mind, there was no one to do this.

Thus matters stood between Minnie and her guardian on the eventful evening of the Myersons' dance, and undoubtedly it could scarcely be considered a satisfactory state of affairs to either of them; but of

all this, Jack, of course, knew nothing. How should he?

It was ten o'clock, and the dancing was going on merrily—too merrily, perhaps, for Colonel Leigh's taste, as he stood in the doorway, contemplating the gay scene with a somewhat bored expression. He had given up dancing years ago, and was not one of those men who take a lively interest in watching other people's amusements. He watched intently, it is true; but he seemed to take no pleasure in it, and Constance thought she had never seen him look so stern.

Minnie had never looked prettier than she did that night, and excitement had lent a colour to her cheeks and a light to her eyes that intensified her girlish beauty into positive loveliness. Even Jack's stately sisters were not so much admired as she; and Susie made up her mind that, despite any plans Constance might have to the contrary, Minnie's visit should not be prolonged beyond the date now fixed for its termination. For she felt that, under favourable conditions, the girl might become too dangerous a rival.

Of course Minnie had been dancing a good deal, but she was not dancing just now; she was not in the room at all, neither was Jack. Perhaps, after all, they had gone to see the moon rise.

Constance crossed to the Colonel, a mischievous smile on her lips.

"You must be frightfully bored by all us frivolous people," she said sympathetically. "Won't you come into the library and see Jack's engravings? He has some very valuable ones, and I know you are a judge of such things."

She spoke very courteously, but without any of the coquetry that had formerly annoyed him so much. Yet he distrusted her.

"Thank you; but I don't like to trouble you so far."

"It is no trouble, Colonel. Come this way."

She led the way across the hall to the library, a large room with French windows opening on to the terrace.

It was very dimly lighted, and through the opened windows a flood of moonlight streamed into the room.

"Oh, I wonder where Jack has put them? They are not in their usual place," Constance exclaimed, glancing round the room. "Wait one moment while I go and make enquiries;" and before he could raise any objections she was gone.

Colonel Leigh walked up to the open window, and stood there looking out.

He was perplexed and troubled. Past scenes rose before his mind's eye, throwing a bewildering shadow across the present; a voice from the dead seemed to ring in his ears, crying ever with a passionate insistence: "Save her, save her from my fate! She will be rich; save her from such fortune-hunters as have ruined my life! Guard her, and make her your wife!" And he had promised to do so; at least, he had promised to obey her last wishes in the spirit, if not to the letter; for he remembered always—what the woman who had jilted him, and spoiled his life years ago, seemed always to forget—that he was himself a poor man, and that he knew that Minnie was an heiress; a fact that had been carefully guarded from her own knowledge and the prying curiosity of the world at large. He would take no advantage of his position, therefore; his own wishes in the matter had nothing to do with it. He strove always to persuade himself that he had no wishes in the matter—that he was merely a machine, and incapable of taking any sort of human interest in his gentle young ward. He had almost succeeded, or so he flattered himself, till—was it only to-night, or was it not rather that afternoon two days ago, when he stepped out on the verandah, and saw Minnie—his little Minnie—with that new light in her eyes, that new tone in her voice? Poor child! And yet—

Suddenly he started, and drew back a little into the shadows.

Two figures were standing together on the terrace, and in the brilliant moonlight he recognised them at once.

He recognised, too, the motive that had brought him here, and smiled contemptuously.

They were talking very earnestly, but in a low tone; not so low, however, but that, standing so near as he did, a few words reached the unseen spectator before it was possible to him to withdraw out of earshot.

Then Minnie, deadly pale, trembling, came into the room—alone.

She started when she saw him standing there, but made an effort to recover herself—not a very successful effort, however, but he was too preoccupied to notice it.

"Minnie," he said quietly, "I think you were rather over-hasty just now. You

have, I fear, sent that young fellow away under a mistaken impression."

"J, Colonel!" she faltered, flushing painfully. "I only—"

"My dear, I overheard a few words—unintentionally, of course—which make me think it is time we came to an understanding, you and I." He paused a moment, as though to give her time to recover herself; and then added abruptly, "Your mother made you promise that you would marry as I wished!"

"Yes, I promised." Very slowly the words came, and she spoke with her eyes bent on the ground. The Colonel, meantime, watched her intently.

"And you thought, foolish child, that your wishes were not to be considered in the matter? That was hardly fair to me, Minnie."

"My mother said—that it was your wish, and hers; that she had wronged you, and I must atone. She made me promise—"

"A great many foolish things, as was her custom!" he said impatiently. "Why, she made me promise that I would ask you to marry me. Will you?"

"If you wish—" she began; but he interrupted her with a quick laugh.

"But I don't, my dear; not now. I must keep my promise, that's all. It would be no atonement, child, to spoil two lives instead of one. What can your mother have been thinking of? But you are to be guided by my advice, and my advice is—call back young Myerson, and tell him there's been a little misunderstanding somewhere—or, wait—he's out there! I'll do it myself."

And, without allowing her time to say anything against this proposal, Colonel Leigh stepped out on to the terrace. He paused a moment, and looked up and down. Jack was standing at some little distance, leaning moodily against the balustrade that parted the terrace from the grassy slopes beyond.

The peaceful moonlight shone all around him, the merry dance-music sounded in his ears; but in Jack's heart there was neither peace nor mirth, only perplexity, and grief, and deep disappointment. The blow had been so unlooked-for, so totally unexpected! In a few moments he would pull himself together, and return to the noise and the crowd of the garish drawing-room; but just for a minute—

The Colonel walked up to him hastily, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"I want your attention one moment, Mr. Myerson, if you please," he said gravely.

Jack looked up, with a very visible effort to pull himself together. His face was white and haggard in the moonlight.

"Colonel Leigh!" he ejaculated. "I'm at your service."

"You have, I understand, been making an offer of marriage to my ward, Miss Brender?"

"I have; though how you come to know it——"

"I was in the library, and fortunately overheard a few words."

"Fortunately?" Jack echoed bitterly.

"Yes, fortunately," the Colonel repeated emphatically; "for it enables me to put things straight; to explain certain matters, as I hope, to your satisfaction. I heard my ward refuse you, and I heard the reason that she gave."

"She told me she was already engaged."

"To me; yes."

"To you? She did not say so, but I suspected it." The younger man looked at him for a moment in silence. "You have not explained much to my satisfaction yet!" he added bitterly.

"No; there has been a great deal of misapprehension, and it is time we understood each other. Minnie, despite her assertion to the contrary, is not engaged to me, and never has been, though she promised her mother to marry me if I wished it. Well, I don't wish it!" and he drew a long breath. "The girl is free, free as air—or would be but for one small consideration."

"And that is——"

"That she loves you, Myerson; and is waiting in the library, there, to tell you so. There he goes, off like a shot; and so ends—what never had a beginning, save in one old fool's fancy! Ah, well," and the Colonel passed his hand over his brow with a weary gesture, "he's a good fellow, and a gentleman; and all one hears of him is to his credit. A good sort, not like the sister. I couldn't wish a better fate for little Minnie!"

Yes, the Colonel was satisfied; and if life seemed to him drearier than he had thought to find it of late years, he was not the man to complain.

Then suddenly he saw a stately figure crossing the terrace towards him, and recognised Constance. What was she after now? he wondered.

And Constance herself immediately answered his question.

"I was just looking for you," she said, as she paused beside him. "Oh, Colonel, I can't tell you how sorry I am!"

"What, about those engravings? Never mind; I'll see them another time."

"Oh, I didn't mean them. I meant—— But you ought to see for yourself—though, perhaps——why did you not wait for me in the library?" she asked abruptly.

"Because other people seemed to have more need of it than I had," he replied slowly.

"Other people? You mean——"

"My ward and your brother, yes."

"Oh, it is shameful of her to treat you so! A heartless little flirt!"

"Miss Myerson," he said sternly, "you must not say such things of my ward. Your brother is there with my knowledge and consent. I sent him to her."

"But—you are making too much of a foolish flirtation!" Constance cried in dismay. "She didn't mean any harm, I'm sure. She knew it was only Jack."

"Yes; and she finds him quite enough to satisfy her; so we need not distress ourselves on their account."

"Or our own?" she asked spitefully.

"Or our own," and he smiled. "You have done your best, and—I thank you."

With which enigmatical words he left her, and strolled off down the terrace.

## ANOTHER VIEW OF MASHONALAND.

LAST month we gave an account of Mr. Selous's remarkable book on those parts of South Africa, in which the process of colony-making is going on before our eyes under such picturesque and romantic conditions; and now comes another singularly interesting account of the experiences of two ladies in the same country during the infancy of that Chartered Company, which at present gives so much promise of attaining a sturdy and independent manhood.\*

No pioneering enterprise—however difficult, and however unlikely to prove practically remunerative—has ever called in vain for volunteers from the crowded ranks of adventurous young Englishmen whose principal difficulty is to discover a field for their exuberant energies; but it

\* "Adventures in Mashonaland." By Two Hospital Nurses. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893.)

is not often that ladies are to be found taking their places, quite as a matter of course, with the advance-guard of civilisation in such unpromising regions as those of the "Hinterland" of South Africa, and doing their share of the work with a coolness, a cheerful courage, and a calm staying power that only the best of the men could equal. Attempts at African travelling have already been made by ladies—much, it would seem, on the principle that urges many of the sex to do a great many things which they cordially detest, solely because they must be imitating men, and getting some sort of notoriety at any hazard—but they have had no definite or intelligent object, and have been as barren of result as they have been of intention. It has, in fact, been proved that it is possible for a lady traveller to penetrate a certain distance into the Dark Continent, but that we knew pretty well before. It has also been conclusively established that she has to return in a very short time with nothing whatever to show for all the trouble she has been at, and with no sort of recompense for the inconveniences, and even dangers, to which her vainglorious foolhardiness has exposed her; but that has also been a proposition which it was really hardly worth demonstrating. Indeed, it may be affirmed, without much fear of contradiction, that, however foolish an exhibition the "advanced" female can make of herself—and she has practically boundless possibilities in that direction—she is never quite so absurd as when she is posing as an explorer, and getting together her little troop of boys to "play at Stanley" with.

Miss Rose Blennerhassett and Miss Lucy Sleeman, whose adventures are so pleasantly and brightly told in the little book which is now before us, are travellers of a very different sort. The really wonderful journey which they made from Beira to Umtali had a very definite object at the end of it, an object which entailed upon them two years' subsequent hard work, and the carrying out of which enabled them to be of incalculable service to many a poor sufferer; while it cannot be doubted that their presence and example, among the wild and reckless men who constituted so large a portion of their surroundings, assisted the gradual process of civilising and settling down as hardly any other influence could have done.

It was in the spring of 1890 that Miss Blennerhassett and Miss Lucy Sleeman left

England for Johannesburg to join the staff of nurses at a little Home Hospital which had been established in the "Golden City," as it was called—although many of its roofs were made of corrugated iron, and some of biscuit tins—and there, in the face of all sorts of difficulties and endless troubles, they laboured for about six months. At the end of that time even the generosity of the Johannesburgers—who seem to have been as liberal as they were tipsy, which is saying a good deal—proved insufficient to provide for the necessities of the hospital and nursing centre for which the Sisters were working, and a retreat had to be made, not without difficulty, to Kimberley. How much the Johannesburg hospital was needed, and how much work there was for these good ladies to do in the Golden City, the simple description of the cemetery will indicate. "There, within a small space, their graves simply numbered, lay hundreds of young Englishmen and a number of young women. I think that not more than two or three of them were past forty when they died. By far the larger number were between twenty and twenty-eight. It was most affecting, too, to see long, long rows of tiny graves, suggestive of real heart-breaking sorrow. The mortality amongst women and children had been terrible. 'When I came up here,' said a doctor to me, 'the women were literally dying like rotten sheep.' It is not surprising that, when the Sisters left that cemetery, it was with a feeling of glad surprise that none of their number had to be left behind in it.

The first stages out of Johannesburg had to be accomplished in a dilapidated old coach which held twelve passengers inside, all, except the Sisters, men, "none of them very thin and one enormously fat. When the sun rose the heat and stuffiness may be imagined." Whenever the team was changed, which was every hour and a half, the men all got out and drank. "No wonder! If I had been a man no doubt I should have done the same. But 'noblesse oblige.' We were women; therefore we smiled amiably at heat, thirst, cramp, and general discomfort. We declared it wasn't half bad, and privately wished we had never been born." This was the spirit of brave cheerfulness with which the Sisters met all their troubles, great or small. Never to complain; always to make the best of things; and to make a point of giving as little trouble as possible; were the principles to which, happily for

others as well as themselves, they steadily adhered throughout.

Six months were spent on duty in the hospital at Kimberley, and then the Sisters, on whom the work had told somewhat severely, began to make preparations for their return to England.

At this time the Chartered Company's expedition to Mashonaland was the absorbing subject of interest with everybody at Kimberley. Everybody was "going up," or had a friend or relation going up, by the new route, *via* the Púngwé river. Even the Bishop of Bloemfontein had given up his diocese for that of Mashonaland, and it is not surprising that when the Sisters were told that he wished to take with him nurses for the hospitals which he intended to establish, but was hampered by want of funds, the Sisters should have volunteered their services. These the Bishop—who does not appear to have been a good man of business, to say the least of it—declined, on the ground that his arrangements were all completed; and, but for the accident of missing a train, the Sisters would have returned to England forthwith. But Africa is a difficult place to escape from. While the Sisters were waiting for the next train, there came a telegram from the Bishop, who had changed his mind—an exercise to which he seems not to have been unaccustomed—and the result of the negotiations which followed was a meeting at Cape Town, at which it was settled that the Sisters should give their services to the Bishop's mission for two years, and should start for Mashonaland as soon as possible.

And here it may be noted that the troubles which invariably arise out of the spelling of native names are almost greater in South Africa even than elsewhere. To take only one instance: Mr. Selous writes "Mashunaland," the present book has it "Mashonaland." Who shall decide? Perhaps the best way is to put it down as one of those things which depend entirely on the "taste and fancy of the speller," and, as we adopted Mr. Selous's version in dealing with his book, to let the ladies have their own way with theirs.

A tedious delay followed. First of all the Bishop decided to take his party by the Púngwé route; then he arranged to go by train from Natal to Maritzburg, and thence by post-cart and waggon; then he abandoned this idea and reverted to the Púngwé plan, although an exceptionally rainy season had reduced the tracks to a

terrible state, which would necessitate some delay at Durban before a start could be made. The same afternoon, however, the Bishop took another view of the situation, and came to the conclusion that it was useless to wait, and that a start must be made the very next morning by the steamer "Venice" for Beira, at the mouth of the Púngwé. In the evening yet another change came over the spirit of the Bishop's dream, and he pointed out that the "Venice" would touch at several ports, and take ten days to get to Beira, whereas the "Norseman," which was to sail in eight or ten days' time, would only occupy four days on the passage. Obviously, therefore, the best thing to do was to wait for the "Norseman," and to pass the interval with a Sisterhood at Maritzburg.

"By this time," the Sisters not unnaturally write, "we were much bewildered by the constant change of plan, and began to think we should never arrive anywhere. We were, therefore, not much surprised when, the next morning, he suggested our staying at Durban instead of going to Maritzburg with him."

In due course the Bishop returned from Maritzburg, having enjoyed himself very much, and in excellent spirits; and the party was full of joyous expectation of reaching Beira in three or four days, and of finding a sufficiency of waggons and coaches at a place called 'Mpanda's, seventy miles up the river; but, on the very morning of the day on which the "Norseman" was to sail, the Bishop declared that he must go on alone, and that the ladies should follow in about a month! Naturally they were much discouraged and disappointed, but, "having to yield, we did it with the best grace we could muster," and away the Bishop went, leaving the three ladies—Miss Blennerhassett, Sister Lucy Sleeman, and Sister B. Welby—to their own devices until they should be joined by Dr. Doyle Glanville, the Bishop's doctor, who was to travel with them.

In about a month the Doctor arrived, but did not bring much comfort with him, declaring that he knew nothing of any settled plan of the Bishop's, and that it would be quite three weeks before he himself would be ready to start up country. This was too much to be borne, and the Sisters, after taking counsel of experienced residents, decided on making a start anyhow, and waiting for the Doctor at 'Mpanda's, where the Bishop was supposed



to be. So on board the next steamer they "steamed forth into the unknown," and in course of time reached Beira, where the old business of delay and change of purpose began all over again, and it was the thirteenth of June before the little party embarked on board the steam-launch "Shark" for conveyance up the Pungwe to 'Mpanda's in pursuit of the "ignis fatuus" of a Bishop, who had already pushed on to Umtali.

There was plenty to look at during the journey. "Families of cranes of every conceivable colour stalked about in the shallows"; troops of hippopotami disported themselves in the water; flights of brilliant butterflies flew overhead; monstrous crocodiles sunned themselves on the long, low mud-banks. In fact, it would have been a pleasant and interesting journey but for the climate. As noon approached the heat became intense. "The launch had no awning; barely a yard separated us from the boiler. The water became a great, glittering, dazzling plane. Our eyes ached, our heads burned. We stood up now and then, that being the only change of position possible. An insatiable thirst consumed us. . . . The river water was quite hot, and very nasty and unwholesome on account of the quantity of rank, decaying vegetation over which it flows. . . . We had a little claret on board and a few oranges; without these latter I don't think we could have got on at all. As it was, there were moments when I felt as if there might be worse fates than that of being eaten by a crocodile. . . . We were, however, determined not to grumble."

It was half-past nine in the evening before 'Mpanda's was reached, and then these poor ladies found that no preparations had been made to receive them. Their tent was occupied by three Europeans who had been ill, and they were obliged to put up with scratch accommodation for the night. "I think a few tears were shed in that tent," Miss Blennerhassett writes; "we could not help feeling forlorn, alone, without even an acquaintance, in the midst of these wild surroundings, but were of course resolved that no one should even guess what we felt." Excellent disciples of Mark Tapley!

The Bishop had departed, but had left his encampment in the care of one Wilkins, who had formerly been with Livingstone; and there, next day, the ladies took up their quarters, and set to work making the best hospital arrangements of which

circumstances admitted. In a few days a letter arrived from the Bishop, who had reached Umtali in Mashonaland; making it quite clear that there was no chance of waggons reaching 'Mpanda's for two months, and advising the ladies to have themselves carried up in machilas—a kind of litter—when they made a fresh start. He certainly had not been trained in anything like the school of a tourist-conducting Cook or Gize, that worthy Bishop! His letter, by the way, was brought by a "runner," and was tied up in a bit of "limbo," and stuck in a cleft stick. The postal arrangements between 'Mpanda's and Umtali were primitive. Miss Blennerhassett says: "I remember the Bishop telling us afterwards that, as he travelled up country, he met several natives who attached themselves to his party. One of them had a small dirty bundle dangling from the end of an assegai. This bundle was always falling into swamps, and being fished out of rivers. At last the Bishop asked what it was. It was Her Majesty's mail!"

In a few days Dr. Glanville arrived, and preparations were made for the journey into the interior, with the result that extreme friction was set up—a sort of triangular duel—between the Doctor, old Wilkins, and the white men attached to the mission. The authority of Wilkins over the men was merely nominal, the Doctor did not know how to manage them, and Wilkins himself was quite impracticable. It was monstrous, he declared, that a man who had been with Livingstone should be ordered about in such a way. Miss Blennerhassett hits him off very neatly in the following stories.

"One morning, Sisters, and 'tis as true as I'm a-biting this crust, we were surrounded by strange niggers—and them niggers meant mischief if ever a nigger did. Livingstone he says, "We're lost," says he; "we must go back and give up. Come here, Wilkins, and advise me!" And I up and says, "Give up, Doctor? Never! Let's go and drive 'em off." The Doctor, he looks at me. "Right you are," he says; "lead on, my brave fellow, and I'll follow!" And as true as I'm a living man we slew seventy before breakfast!" Wilkins professed a lordly contempt for the Stanley expedition. "If Stanley'd known his business he'd have had a man like me to manage for him," he was fond of saying. By all this it will be seen that Livingstone's man had an excellent opinion of himself,

and was not likely to knock under easily to a mere tyro such as Dr. Glanville. 'I'm a man to be trusted,' he would say, with an air of great importance; 'them there Sisters know what to expect. I'm used to the ways of females, and the very night they came I says, Sisters! let there be no mistake—I'm a married man.' This is capital, but the book is full of incisive little thumb-nail sketches as good as, or even better than, this.

There appearing to be no other way of getting away from 'Mpanda's the three ladies, ignoring all the advice to the contrary which was showered upon them, determined to tramp up to Umtali—a matter of a hundred and ninety miles. If women had never walked in Africa there was no reason why they should not begin, they argued. Dying is just as disagreeable in a room as on the veldt. If, after a day or two's march, they found it impossible to go on, they could always turn back. In short, they made up their minds to walk, and, as is the custom of their sex, stuck to their point and had their own way. Thus, after almost endless difficulties before a sufficient number of bearers could be hired, and further troubles before money enough could be got to pay them, the party set out from 'Mpanda's on the first of July—the three ladies, Dr. Glanville, Mr. Walter Sutton, and a number of "boys," many of whom, of course, deserted on the first opportunity. Wilkins, much to his disgust, was left behind in charge of the stores.

And a wonderful tramp it was that followed! Even in these days of athletic "records" there is nothing that we know of to beat the plucky achievement of these three ladies in making their way on foot from 'Mpanda's to Umtali. The difficulties of the track were prodigious. Its dangers were far from alight. The boys gave all manner of trouble; there was no one in the party who could speak a word of the language, and the slender stock of Portuguese which Miss Blennerhassett and some of the boys possessed, was the only medium of communication. Sometimes the path was very rough and the walking terribly difficult. Here is a bit of description of the second day's march. "The track crossed a burnt-up plain, and then lost itself in a long stretch of loose sand, where at every step forward one seemed to slip two back. Trying as it is to walk through grass that is ten feet high, coarse, strong, slashing your face as you push your way through, we were glad when we came

to patches of it, because of the slender shade it afforded. Like all novices at such work we had, early in the day, impatiently drained the water bottles. Then came some hours during which we suffered considerably from thirst before we reached any water. This we did late in the afternoon, when we came upon some rude bamboo huts beside a dismal swamp. . . . The night spent in this shelter might have been passed outside a lion's cage at the Zoo. The lions, coming down to drink at the swampy pool just in front of our huts, made such a terrific noise that the earth seemed to shake with their roaring. It was a strange sensation to find ourselves so near all these wild creatures, with not even the slenderest door or mat to shut them out of our hut."

Notwithstanding all difficulties the party reached Sarmento, nearly forty-five miles from 'Mpanda's, in about two days and a half—"not such bad walking as English people might think," Sister Lucy Sleeman says. More difficulties followed with the boys, and then came a miserable time. "The next two days were wet and rather miserable. We got soaked to the skin as we walked through the long, wet grass. The boys too went badly, wanting to stop at every opportunity; we had great difficulty in starting them at all in the mornings. We could not get properly dry at night, for the fires burnt badly on account of the rain. The rude grass shelters that the boys put up for us to sleep in at night were hardly watertight. Hyænas made night hideous, coming quite close to our little camp. I think the shriek these animals utter is more objectionable than the cry of any other wild beast. It fills one with shuddering horror, and is more like the wail of a lost soul than a mere earthly sound." Next morning "the road became dreadful. There were hours of walking through grass ten feet high; through tall rushes that slashed one's face; through small bogs and shallow streams, into which we dashed, boots and all, much to the delight of the boys, but to the horror of our white escort." Soon afterwards, and while Umtali was yet seventy miles distant, all the boys but four finally bolted, and Mr. Sutton had to be left behind with one boy to take care of the stores while the rest of the party pushed on. It was terrible work during the last few days, and when the last day of all arrived it

came none too soon. The provisions had run short, indeed there was nothing left but a little tea and half a pot of Bovril. Sister Aimée—Miss Blennerhasset—was suffering severely from fever. "This was the hardest day of all. A bad, rocky path; hill after hill to climb; valleys and ravines to cross; burning heat, and, worst of all, for some hours we could find no water." When a small stream was reached at last there was no wood to make a fire to heat some Bovril—they did not dare to drink much water—and it was not for some considerable time that the party came to a larger stream in a grove of bananas, and were able to make some soup, which revived them for a fresh effort. "Then there were more hills to climb, more valleys and ravines to cross, interspersed with long stretches of tall grass, which after a time had a most bewilderingly dizzy effect. At last, towards sunset, Dr. Glanville descried a distant flag—Umtali!" Half an hour's quick marching brought the party to a small river, and as Sister Aimée was scrambling over a fallen tree, which served as a bridge, a hand was suddenly stretched out to help her. It was the Bishop, who was thus run to earth at last!

Of the strange life which the Sisters Aimée and Lucy Sleeman led for some two years at Umtali—Sister B. Welby married a doctor before very long; of the hospital they organised; of the patients they nursed; of their queer adventures with pioneers and Chartered Company's police—the resources of the Bishop's mission soon broke down, the Bishop himself returned to England in search of funds, and the hospital was taken over by the Chartered Company—of the fevers that they had; of their adventures with wild beasts; of their interviews with native chiefs and chieftainesses; we will say nothing, but will advise our readers, for satisfaction on these and many other points, to turn to the pages of the book itself. Always bright and cheerful, gifted with a keen sense of humour and with a natural power of easy narrative, the Sisters are, throughout, excellent company, and their book is one of the pleasantest and most agreeable of the many books about South African life and travel which we have ever seen. We can cordially commend the *Adventures of the two Hospital Nurses in Mashonaland* to the attention of all readers of ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

Meanwhile, we may quote one of the thumb-nail sketches of character to which we have already alluded. This is Mr. Cecil Rhodes, whose name is just now in everybody's mouth. "His generosity is proverbial, everything about the man is big—faults, virtues, projects. His ambition itself is largely tinctured with altruism. He is the darling of Fortune—and that blind goddess does not often select her favourites from the Sunday School. We were especially charmed by the great man's simple manners, and boyish enjoyment of a joke. He told us that he had made political capital out of our walk up. The Cape Town Government having objected to his journey to Umtali on the score of danger, he answered that if ladies had been able to walk up without tents or waggons, it would be absurd for a man not to be afraid to ride up, as the horses, of course, would fall victims to the fly! After this statement he had met with no further opposition. Mr. Rhodes remained, chatting delightfully, for a couple of hours, and left promising to see us through all our difficulties. Nor was this a vain promise. Of his many kindnesses, we thought most of his having remembered to replace the small medical library, which had been lost with our luggage. The books not being procurable at the Cape, this busy man took the trouble of having them sent for to England. He left that evening for Salisbury, leaving every one as hopeful, enterprising, and confident in the resources of the country, as they had been dispirited and pessimistic before his arrival." Again, "he was besieged with petitions of all sorts. Malcontents and chronic grumblers went to his hut, and came away in a few moments cheerful and satisfied. Not that anything was altered in the condition of affairs—the man's mere personal magnetism wrought the change." Indeed, the faith in Mr. Rhodes is practically illimitable in Africa. "Whatever happens, people shrug their shoulders, and say: 'It will be all right, Rhodes will square it.'" Indeed, some enthusiasts believe him to be capable even of "squaring" the dreaded tse-tse fly!

We will conclude our notice of this entertaining book by quoting one of the numerous excellent lion stories which it contains. And a grim one it is!

"A prospector named Vogler, camped somewhere between Beira and Umtali, was searching for a reef supposed to be

lying in that direction. One day some natives came to his camp, telling him that two white men were 'besieged by lions' a hundred miles away, and that both were dead, or dying. Vogler wasted no time; he knew that white men were encamped at the place indicated by the natives, and found that the latter, questioned individually, told a consistent tale. Taking with him a guide and a few boys to carry provisions, he walked the hundred miles in less than two days and a half.

"In front of the solitary hut, built at some distance from water, lay the bones of a lion; several more had their lair in the bushes close by, according to the natives. With some difficulty Vogler obtained admission to the hut. There he found two white men in an indescribable condition. One man was lying on a rude stretcher apparently unconscious; the other was up and about, but looked a ghastly object. An intolerable smell poisoned the atmosphere. Having attended to the first wants of these two miserable men, Vogler asked what had happened. The man who was still conscious told him.

"His comrade, he said, had caught the fever, was very ill, and too weak to move. The natives had deserted, as they so often do in face of sickness. One night, hearing a noise round the hut, he thought the boys might have returned—perhaps with evil intentions. Taking his rifle, he threw open the door. It was a bright, moonlight night. Straight in front of him, at a distance of about twenty paces, stood a huge lion; he fired, and killed it. As he lowered his gun, the lioness, which he had not perceived, stole noiselessly round the hut, seized his right hand, and literally tore it off. The man had presence of mind enough to dart back into the hut, and bang the door. It was a frail protection, being made of reeds; but in spite of the terrible wound he found strength enough to pile sacks of rice against it. His right arm was a ghastly stump, the broken bones sticking out through the bleeding flesh below the elbow. His hand was gone. Fearing that he would bleed to death, he melted a quantity of brown sugar and plunged the stump into it. It was, when Vogler saw it, still coated over with a hard mass of sugar.

"He now no longer dared to leave the hut. He and his friend had provisions, but no water. Part of their store was composed of tins of salmon and sardines.

They bored holes in the tins, and drank the oil, and the horrible fish liquid! The man with fever had got gradually worse, and appeared likely to die, but he eventually recovered. Unfortunately, it was impossible to save the wounded man. The arm was gangrened, and he died soon after Vogler's arrival."

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER III.

THE floor of the carriage was whitened with snow, and after the first shock of consternation, it struck Lella that he must have opened the door and left the train while she was leaning out of the opposite window. Probably he, too, had alighted to see what was wrong. Whether he had had time to return to the train she could not tell. But she could not help a feeling of relief that, at any rate, he had left the carriage in which she was travelling.

That strange paroxysm of repulsion and fear which had overwhelmed her a few moments before, had, in spite of its apparent groundlessness, been so vivid, that not even the arguments of common sense could entirely dissipate her dislike to the boy's presence.

Happily, she had not time to trouble her head much more about him.

The train drew up again, and this time it was at Longwood; and as the lights of the station glimmered before her eyes, every other thought was swallowed up in the one, that she had reached the boundary of the new world in which her life was hitherto to be spent.

Stiff with cold and fatigue, trembling a little from the strain of expectation, she lifted down her wraps, and was preparing to open the door; when it was opened for her, and she saw, helpful and kindly, the smiling face of Dr. Burton.

"This is your destination," he said, taking her wraps from her in one hand, and helping her to alight with the other. The snow which had drifted into the carriage had melted into pools of dirty water, and as he glanced at the dreary comfortlessness of the carriage, his hand closed involuntarily more warmly over hers, as a sudden rush of protecting pity stirred him. "What a miserable journey you must have had! You ought never to

have been in that wretched carriage!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Ah!" glancing in the direction of another passenger who stood a few yards from them, speaking to a servant in livery.

Leila followed his look, conscious for an instant longer of the kindly pressure of the strong, warm hand on her own chilled fingers. Then as he released them, he made a gesture in the direction of the other passenger, talking with the man in livery, who both, at that instant, moved towards her.

"These are your people," he said. "This is Mr. Hesketh Anson."

Leila saw a dark, rather stern-featured young man, whose expression, as he came up to her, was one of decided ill-temper. She had been standing in the shadow, but moving forward to meet him she stepped into the light of one of the station lamps, and the young man apparently saw her face clearly for the first time, for the annoyance in his faded for a moment into the blankest discomfiture. But it vanished instantly again as he caught the watchful gaze of the doctor.

"I believe," he said with cold civility to the girl, "that you are going to Moorlands?"

"Yes," she said timidly, wondering with a sinking at heart if all the Ansons had such hard eyes and repellent manners. "I was told that I would be met here."

"It is all right," he said. "Good evening, doctor," with a slight nod to the other young man, whose existence he had not hitherto seemed to notice. "I will take charge of Miss—Miss—" with the faintest touch of impatience in his note, as if something in the situation annoyed him.

"Mallet," she said quietly.

Mr. Anson, suggesting that she should point out her luggage to the groom, turned on his heel to lead the way, taking no further notice of the doctor. A wave of hot colour surged over Leila's pale face.

"Thank you very much for your kindness," she said, looking up into that young man's face, losing her shyness in the impulse of the moment.

Dr. Burton's eyes, which had grown dark and stern, lightened under the influence of the sudden animation sparkling in her face. It improved her wonderfully.

"I have done nothing to need thanks," he said, smiling. "I only wish I could have been of more use to you. Miss Mallet, if ever—" he checked himself,

colouring slightly. "I hope we shall meet again soon," he said more quietly, raising his hat.

She smiled prettily, flushing a little, too, and then catching sight of Mr. Anson, who had turned to see why she was not following him, she went forward to join him. It struck her that he did not look well pleased with her for keeping him waiting. But she made no apology, and walked silently by his side to the luggage van, out of which her box had just been put by the guard. It was a small one, of an old-fashioned make, and all in keeping with her shabby, dowdy costume. But the smart-looking groom lifted it gently enough, glancing at her furtively from under his brows as he did so.

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Anson quickly.

"Yes," she said quietly, but flushing again with a thought, half indignant, half humiliated, that he was relieved to find that she did not give him too much trouble.

It was a childish vexation, perhaps. But it was her first experience in a world of strangers, who not only took no interest in her, but even, in some way of which her sensitiveness was dimly conscious, disapproved of her being there at all. She felt very lonely as she followed Mr. Anson through the station, out into the dark, blustering night, where a brougham was awaiting them in the road. Unluckily, its lamps caught her face just as Mr. Anson turned to address her.

There was a scarcely perceptible pause.

"If you do not mind," he said with icy coldness, "we are to drive to Moorlands together."

It would not have mattered much if she had objected, it struck her. There was apparently no other means of either of them getting there than by the same brougham. She took advantage of his moving away to speak to the porter who had come out, apparently to assist the groom, to make a furtive dab at her eyes, trusting that Mr. Anson had not seen the unlucky tears that had suddenly, in spite of pride and indignation, welled up into them.

A moment later he entered the brougham and they drove off; the porter, with a curious look on his face, taking a last prolonged stare at her, as he fell back to let the carriage pass.

Mr. Anson seemed to notice it, for muttering something he pulled up the window sharply. His manner became a

little more agreeable after they had fairly started, though there was still an effort in his civility of which she was painfully conscious. He put his own travelling-rug across her knees, and made a few polite enquiries as to the length and comfort of her journey. He seemed to feel actual sympathy when he heard of her long waiting at Weybourne Station.

"And you could get nothing to eat, there!" he said. "You must be starving."

She hastily assured him that she needed nothing, adding that she had been well cared for by the station-master, and telling him how she was able to have some tea after all, thanks to Dr. Burton requiring it for himself.

She was startled at the effect of her speech. Mr. Anson's face, which had been taking a pleasanter expression, looked black as thunder. But, perhaps seeing her astonishment, he expressed in words flatly contradicted by his tone, that he was glad she had been so fortunate. After that they relapsed for some minutes into uncomfortable silence, during which she sat gazing through the carriage window at the black hedge-lined road on which at moments gleamed, in weird flashes, the light of the carriage lamps.

Then he spoke again: "It is not much farther now. You will be glad to get in from the cold. That wretched train was later than ever to-night."

The speech reminded her of some of the incidents of the last part of her journey.

"I was afraid there was an accident," she said. "We stopped so suddenly—and I think I did hear some one saying that there was something on the line."

"It was nothing much," he said carelessly. "They seize every opportunity of a little delay."

"But—I do hope it was all right," and then half shyly, half anxiously, "Such a funny thing happened. There was a boy in the carriage with me, and when the train stopped, while I was looking out he disappeared, and the train went on without him. I hope there was nothing wrong."

"He probably knew the ways of our local railway," he said grimly, "and got out and walked home."

"I suppose he did," doubtfully. "But it was curious I didn't hear him," and again a slight chill of frightened repulsion touched her as she recalled the uncanny manner of his departure. "He seemed to have vanished; and he looked very

delicate, too—at least his hand did, it was dreadfully white and thin," correcting herself, her mind more intent for the moment on her own unpleasant recollections of the boy, than on the fact of describing him to her companion. "His face was fat and heavy-looking, and he had no overcoat, only a grey sort of suit." She broke off abruptly, recalled to the consciousness of her suddenly inspired loquacity.

He sat staring at her, something strange and frozen in his face, and if ever mortal fear looked out of a man's eyes, it did from those of Mr. Hesketh Anson.

"A boy—in grey," he asked, and his lips seemed to move stiffly, "with long, thin fingers——"

So great was the terror that those "long thin fingers" had kindled in her, that her shyness and discomfiture once more vanished, and she acquiesced eagerly:

"It was such an ugly hand!" she exclaimed. "It reminded me of a great crawling spider—the movement of the fingers, and once I had such a queer——" she broke off again, blushing hotly, as she suddenly became conscious that she was making these absurd if uncanny confidences to a total stranger.

"A queer what?" he asked quietly. His face had regained its usual expression, only it seemed to have grown a shade paler.

She would not tell him for a moment. Then, as he persisted, half-vexed at his persistence, half-ashamed of her own folly, she mentioned the fact of his having so stealthily changed his position.

"I didn't hear him move," she said uncomfortably. "And so I was just a little startled at seeing him near me." She stopped. She almost fancied she caught a half-breathed exclamation from him: "Good Heaven!" But as he still sat looking at her she went on: "It was the storm and the strangeness of it all, and I was nervous, I suppose," she said, trying to laugh it off.

"Yes," he said, "you were over-tired, and fancied things." But his voice was as hard as steel. He had plainly no sympathy with nerves. He sat for a moment or two silent with something rigid in his attitude. Then he suddenly lowered his window and called out to the coachman. "Can't you hurry up a little?" he cried savagely. "Drive as fast as you can!" He closed the window.

The rest of the drive was passed in

silence. Mr. Anson sat back in his corner, his arms folded on his breast. He never stirred. But Leila, with the almost unnatural acuteness of perception which resulted from the over-strain of her own nervous system, became conscious that he was burning with an intolerable impatience to reach the journey's end. Venturing to glance up once into his face, she saw that drops of moisture had gathered on his forehead.

What did it mean? Was it possible that that horrible boy in grey had anything to do with Moorlands, and that others beside herself experienced the repulsion and fear his presence had awakened in her?

But the carriage drove through the lodge gates into the avenue leading up to the house before she could find any answer to her doubts or questions.

In the shrieking of the wind, raging now a regular hurricane, the sound of the carriage wheels was lost as they stopped before the door. As the groom jumped down to ring the bell, Mr. Anson, apparently impatient of delay, sprang out too, leaving the brougham door open behind him. In a moment the cushions and floor of the carriage were whitened by the snow as it swirled through the open door.

As Leila sat hesitating to alight, the door of the house was flung open, and a

flood of bright warm light fell out into the blackness of the wild night. She saw Mr. Anson outlined for a second against the warm glow, as he turned with what seemed a fierce gesture of impatience on the manservant, as if reproaching him for his slowness in opening the door. Then he hurried on into the house, ignoring entirely the girl he had left in the carriage.

The groom hurried back to her assistance, and, perhaps because of his master's rudeness, showed her a certain friendly if respectful civility.

"I'm afraid you are starved to death, miss," he said, taking her wraps from her numbed hands, and stooping to brush away some of the snow that lay thickly on the carriage step. "It looks as if we are going to have a storm like we had ten years ago. We'll be snowed up for sure," glancing at her as if wondering how she would take the information.

She was powdered white from head to foot by the time, with the groom's assistance—for she could scarcely stand against the wind—she had mounted the broad, low stone steps leading to the hall door; and as she reached the threshold a shrieking, raging gust of snow-laden wind, sweeping down on the house, caught her and flung her against the side posts, rushing on past her into the house, where it died away in choked sobbing in some distant corridor.

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

*Author of "Aunt Hepey's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.*

#### CHAPTER XIV. FOR ANOTHER MAN'S SIN.

THERE was a man in the One Hundred and Ninety-Third called McMurdock. He had a droll, rough-hewn face, quite red all over, and as rough as if it had been scrubbed with sandpaper. Once he had climbed to the dizzy height of a corporal's rank, but in consequence of too frequent visits to the canteen, had to climb down again; and now reposed with much dignity on the rank of a full private. He was a cheery, genial fellow, and the loyalest soul! One panacea for every earthly ill he clung to. "The Queen—God bless her! She knows best!" If a strap was lengthened, or the cut of a patrol jacket altered, it was still the same tale. He would look at the article critically, and then, in the firm belief that that very article had been inspected by Her Majesty's own eyes, came the magic shibboleth, "The Queen—God bless her! She knows best." Private McMurdock was aware that the world held a vast company of civilians; did he not, indeed, see them as they went about their various avocations in life, when he took his walks abroad? But there is no reason to believe that he regarded them in the light of fellow-creatures. He appeared to possess no home and no relatives, and had first enlisted in the One Hundred and Ninety-Third as a very diminutive band-boy, being apparently nobody in particular, and coming from nowhere. "What does a man wi' a regiment to stand in, an' a red

coat on 'is back, want with a home?" he would say contemptuously; "it's all very well for them as hasn't got no other place in the world—nobody can't gainsay that—but a man like me hasn't got no call for such luxuries; an' as to relations, why, one chum's worth all the families in creation." A day was yet to come in which McMurdock was to find a consolation deeper yet in his favourite dogma; for the One Hundred and Ninety-Third serving later on in a deadly and torrid clime, he, lying at the point of death, spoke thus, "It seems a devil of a place this to send a soldier to; but the Queen, God bless her, she knows best!" And so, turning his head to the wall with a smile, spake no more.

But this was a long way off when the regiment lay in Cork, and cursed itself hoarse at the tar-barrels and other devices of the enemy. McMurdock, hale and hearty, with a word of caution (his own reduction from the rank of corporal doing duty as the horrible example) to all young soldiers as to too frequent appearance at the canteen, and a consequent neglect of the kit and accoutrements, was full of life and energy. Full also of marvellous yarns, and stories of adventure, and it says much for the wit and skill of the narrator that these did not pall upon his audiences, even after many repetitions. There was one story everybody loved. It was called the "Story of the Black Dog," and as a snowball gathers substance as it rolls, had gathered fresh and wonderful details in its career as an oft-told tale. McMurdock once had known a man—the greatest "drinkiat" possible; and the said man had the horrors—"had 'em awful bad"—and saw a black dog. He was always telling them about this black dog, and how fierce



it was; how it sat by his bed all night, and followed him about all day. Well, one day McMurdock had a little kitten with him—soldiers, we all know, are fond of such things—and the black dog worried the kitten. "Was the kitten hurt?" some man would say at this juncture. "Dead as a doornail," would McMurdock reply, bringing his fist down with a mighty jerk; "and ever after when that man had the blue horrors, every one was mighty particular to take no pet animals along with them when they went to see how he was getting on." Then McMurdock would glare around to be sure that no man had aught to say, adding that the whole thing went to prove there was sometimes more reality in sick men's fancies than people thought.

A highly idealised edition of this popular narrative was being given for the edification of three or four raw recruits, limp and depressed from long drill under hard-hearted Sergeants, who were unreasonable enough to expect a man should know his right foot from his left.

Not only the recruits, but older hands still, stood in need of a little early refreshment on the present occasion, for the regimental atmosphere was more than a trifle dull, and not even a brisk autumn day, with glint of brightest sunshine and rustle of brown and golden leaves, could disperse the gloom. The great night of bonfires, torches, coffins, and Barrack Street bands was nigh upon a fortnight old. It had been talked over, sworn at, discussed in every possible light, and from every possible standpoint. Nothing could be said about it that had not been said. It had died out as completely as its own fires, of which nothing but ashes remained. Also, like some great crisis in a disease, it seemed to have given vent to much seething discontent, and to have led to a calm and more peaceful state of things. The rebels had shown what they could do, and no one had interfered with them. They had shaken the red cloth in the face of the bull, and the bull had neither bellowed, pawed the ground, nor lowered his horns; had, rather, gazed steadily over and beyond the waving rag, and opposed a masterly inactivity to the rave and the rant of excited multitudes.

If you make a first-class bogie, and nobody is frightened, bogie-making, as a pleasure, is apt to pall. Things were accordingly flat. True, a strong ripple of discussion had agitated the ranks as to the peculiar conduct of Colour-Sergeant number

one company. He had met the picket the night of the great disturbance, and his appearance had been such as to cause the men thereof to make furtive mouths at one another, and almost drop an unfortunate comrade whom they were carrying—face downwards—to the guard-room.

To think of Gentleman Jack conducting like that—and he on special duty too! His forage cap was on the back of his head, his face white and wild; he stared straight before him, like a man who sees a goblin.

But the thing passed. Soldiers are easy-going in the matter of drink, and would, indeed, have made small comment but for the fact of Gentleman Jack bearing such a character for sobriety, and being on duty at the time. And McMurdock flourished exceedingly in the general dullness, and was greatly sought after as a high-class "raconteur." As has already been stated, he was telling the famous dog story—with embellishments. But at the critical moment McMurdock stopped short, jerked out a quick oath, and sat staring at a new-comer who had joined the group. A grey face, starting eyes, and a mouth that twitched, and had to have a hand passed over it every now and again in an effort to keep it still—Private Harry Deacon, number one company, with a strange unlikeness to himself.

"What's up with ye, lad?" cried McMurdock, "are ye qualifying to set up a jim-jam dog of your own?"

"I've not wet me lips to-day, till now," said Harry, and truly his lips seemed dry and stiff, like those of a man sickening for malarial fever, and his eyes had a cruel glitter and sheen.

"Go on with the story," shouted the men, "don't be baulking the raw recruit, give him the end of the dog's tale."

But the life had died out of McMurdock's narrative; he made a lame conclusion, and in a few moments was out of the canteen, and sauntering towards the men's quarters with Deacon.

"What's up with you, lad?" said the older man when the two were out of hearing of the rest.

"Just that——"

"Just what—eh?"

"The divil himself, an' no other, an' any time he has wid me, too—for I'm ready enough to listen to the worreds he's got so glib on his tongue."

McMurdock scratched his head; it was a kind of help and stimulant to thought.

"Where's Coghlan?" came as the result of the process.

"Is it me that's the keeper av Coghlan?" replied the other with a curse; then turned sulky, and sat on the chair formed by his tidied-up cot, with his head on his hands.

It was a strange thing that these two hardened warriors, Coghlan and McMurdock, had such a soft place in their hearts for the boy Deacon; and maybe they themselves would have found it hard to explain the matter; but certain it was that, ever since that sunny morning in spring when he stood up to the triangles and took his punishment in such brave fashion, they had set themselves to befriend him. In his heart Coghlan believed that pretty Norah had acted as decoy to the young soldier, and, playing Eve to a new Adam, tempted him to disloyalty. He had even had visions of Harry drilling a squad of Fenians on some breezy hillside, after having constituted himself their captain; visions which, if imparted to McMurdock, would have had the most terrifying results, since treason to "the Queen—God bless her!" was, in his estimation, a thing calling for instant lynching of the offender.

No, it was drink McMurdock's fears turned to, and rollicking companions of the civilian kind "outside," creatures who loved to bring disgrace upon the soldier if possible, being willing enough to pay for the necessary libations. Consequently he had no belief in Deacon's protestations of sobriety, but came to the conclusion the boy was hovering on the confines of the horrors, and might as likely as not see fifty black dogs before morning. He hurried off to find Coghlan, but when the two returned together, there was no sign of Deacon, neither could any one give any account of him.

"He's up to the girl Norah's, athaling swate kisses from her lips, an' drinkin' the poteen them divils are after tratin' him to," thought Coghlan, and then his heart smote him for thinking hardly of the pretty colleen, as the memory of her sad sweet face came over him. "It's quarrelling wid his swateheart he's bin," he said aloud to McMurdock; "there's nothin' upsets a man like quarrelling wid his girl—the whole worrold seems upside down, an' the burreds av the air mock at ye as they sing in the hedgerows. I'm that way meself wid 'Liza whin she an' I fall out—the howly saints be wid us all this night and day; but wimmin causes

a dale o' sorrow, the craythurs. More's the pity, for they're plissant enough whin they're plased."

"Deacon looked precious like killing his girl, or any one that came convenient," growled McMurdock, and Coghlan shook his head, but his thoughts were too deep for words. He was not in the same room as Harry; but McMurdock was not only in the same room, but slept in the next cot. Harry's was at the end of the long row of beds, near the wall; a position much coveted, as it was supposed to give just a shade more privacy. That night McMurdock was suddenly awakened, and found himself sitting bolt upright in his cot, he knew not why. Some one had rudely interrupted his sleep by the utterance of a sort of wailing cry; and what was that white figure standing by the near window?

The scene was weird enough, for the moon, shining in with a cold, silvery light, touched with whiteness the sleeping faces on the pillows, so that they looked like dead men, every one. It was quite a relief to see one stir and hear him mutter in his sleep. The figure by the window never stirred, and McMurdock saw that Harry's cot was empty. With an oath that had in it some element of prayer, he crept from his bed. He did not want to rouse the men, and set every one cursing and wondering. He went softly to the lad's side, and then he saw what he had seen in the morning—a grey face, with staring eyes, and a mouth that twitched and worked—but now the eyes saw nothing. They were fixed and glassy, like those of a man just dead. As McMurdock reached his side, Deacon drew up one hand to his shoulder, fumbled with the other, and, still staring glassily out into the moonlight that flooded the stones of the yard, gave a sort of sob, and cried in a husky, breathless whisper: "My God, he's down—he's down—he's down!" Then his arms fell to his sides, and McMurdock led him back to his bed like a helpless child, and he fell there huddled and still asleep.

"I tell you he was dreamin' of murder," said the old soldier to Coghlan, relating these things next day. But the sunshine was so bright, the leaves so red and yellow, the band playing so cheerily, that gruesome fancies died out, and more cheerful talk ensued. What visions of the night can stand against the buoyancy of a crisp autumn day, flooded with light and colour?

The band of the One Hundred and Ninety-Third was a celebrity. From the Colonel to the tiny toddlers in the married quarters every one delighted in its music, and we already knew of the unsurpassable excellence of Herr Schaffenhausser, the talented bandmaster.

It may be remembered that there were two bands—the reed band and the string band—and now, on this winsome day that summer must have lost and autumn found, the former was going to play in the Mardyke. Perhaps nowhere in Ireland, if we except that fairy glen, the Dargle, near Dublin, is there a prettier spot than the Mardyke. There in the smooth velvet-green ground is cricket in summer time, carried on with zeal that never flags, while the click of the bat mingles with the murmur of the river near at hand. In autumn the lovely tints on all the woods around make a lovely landscape, in some years a sort of faint reflection of the fair Canadian Fall; and the river shows gleams of red and yellow mirroring the boughs above. From one side of the Mardyke is seen the queenly College on its beautiful wooded height, and, where the bridge spans the water that here and there glides in shallow glassy reaches through the archway, loose-strife and meadow-queen bend from the bank, mingling their blossoms with the sedge and pale forget-me-not.

Add the strains of Rossini or Auber to this scene, and little remains to be asked for. Indeed, happy smiles, and the music of laughter, the murmur of merry voices, and the frou-frou of pretty skirts against the grass made Lieutenant Charles Verrinder inclined to think that life was decidedly worth the living. True, a nervous agitation was to be noticed in his demeanour, but it was a pleasant flutter, and not unconnected with the sight of two graceful figures walking to and fro under the chaperonage of Mrs. Musters. If the consciousness of having made a mistake is painful, a certain pleasurable sensation may accrue from the conviction that the mistake can be remedied. Mr. Verrinder was full of this delightful assurance, and beamed as he walked. Chubby had been on detachment duty since that day when his eyes were opened, and his heart gladdened by feeling that he had made a blunder; and this was the first time he had seen Elsie.

"Our friend seems to have a lot of 'side' on to-day," said a grinning youngster, indicating Chubby, to Blizzard.

But Blizzard knew all about it, and only nodded by way of reply.

Elsie was "so surprised to see Mr. Verrinder. She really had thought he was gone away—to Haulbowline, wasn't it?—for quite a long time."

The two had fallen a little behind, and were virtually alone.

Verrinder looked gravely into his companion's face, and under his gaze the laughter died out of her eyes, and her mouth trembled at the corners. But Elsie fought hard to carry things off with a high hand. She had a high spirit of her own, he thought, and would take a lot of taming; but the spirit of mastery was on him. He had blundered once, he was not going to blunder again, and—the present opportunity was precious. The Hennekers were such a very united and devoted family; you generally found them in groups. But here was the sunshine, and the music, and—Elsie all to himself. The grave look that he had turned upon her seemed to strip all the little affectations off Elsie's soul. Her voice faltered a little as she said:

"Besides—I thought—I fancied——"

"Yes!" he answered, bending forward with intense yet restrained interest, "you thought—you fancied?"

Oh, why had she ever begun a sentence she could not finish! Actually the tears were starting to her eyes, but then those waltzes always made her feel like that. They had the saddest rhythm.

"Miss Elsie, I am not a very patient man—and this is rather trying, you know!"

"Well, I mean that you seemed—that we thought——"

"Yes!"

Then out it came with the prettiest little rush of confidence:

"Were you angry with us—with Alison and me? We thought—we fancied—we were so sorry."

"No—I—made a blunder. I could not be angry with you, Miss Henneker—Elsie—because there is nothing in the world I think so much of, but—you know that——"

The soft, low thud of the drum still marked the swinging time of the waltz. To Elsie the whole world seemed swinging round to its sad, sweet melody. The moment had come to her that comes to most women—the moment when a word means a life; when a smile is a gift for all time.

She lifted her blue eyes to his—bashful enough, yet steadfast, too.

"Yer," she said, "I know."

After that the deluge.

At least so it seemed to those two, for rushing seas of feeling, dancing waves of joy filled either heart; and no thought of Verrinder's pay looked upon as a means of subsistence, or of the portly Rector in his Midland parish—not even of Major Henneker—intruded, to dim their vast, supreme content.

Everything was very confused, ill-defined, and uncertain, but oh, so delightful! Verrinder, wishing to enter into explanations, was obliged to do so in a fragmentary kind of way, in consequence of interruptions.

"You see I made a mistake about—Dennison. I fancied——"

Elsie's sauciness was by no means yet driven out of her. The tears were scarce dry in her eyes, yet a gleam of fun shone out like a sparkle as her eyebrows went up.

"I don't know anything so annoying as to find one has made a mistake and—fancied things."

"I don't know about that," said Verrinder, getting red; "it may be very nice to find you have been in the wrong, and to be set right, don't you know? All the same I am very sorry about Dennison. Please forgive me for speaking of him—you see, I feel I have a sort of right—that is you have given me——"

"I have given you nothing yet," said Miss Coquette, casting her eyes down with an exasperating demureness. "I only said—I—knew."

"Still, you wouldn't have said it like that if you hadn't——"

Was ever such a gathering of broken sentences known, yet words significant of so much!

At this point much skilful generalship was needed to avoid Mrs. Musters, who had suddenly become conscious that one of her chickens had strayed from beneath the shelter of her wing. Crafty manœuvring baffled the enemy, and exultant in victory, Chubby led his companion towards the further confines of the ground, ostensibly to admire Queen's College glittering white in the sunshine amid its coronal of trees.

Even so, they were worried by skirmishers in the form of little Missy and good Eliza, who had come with the rest of the world to hear the band.

"Oh, Mis—ter Verrinder," said little Missy, pushing back her big picture-hat

with its snowy, curling feathers, the better to look up into her destined sweetheart's face, "Mr. Drummer says the old boy will get the Fenians. Who is the old boy? Liza won't tell me."

"My dear little soul," said Mr. Verrinder in reply, "this is no place for theological discussion. Run back to Eliza like a good girl."

Which Missy did, pouting; but the last glimpse they caught of her she was flying like a lapwing after her friend, the big horse-soldier, doubtless to put the same trying question to him, the while Eliza, helpless and distracted, tried to follow in her wake.

Having wandered far, it suddenly occurred to Elsie that they had better take the shortest way home at once; for the music, faint with distance, had ceased, and Mrs. Musters was doubtless on her way to Monte Notte, consoled by Alison's assurance that Elsie would be safe as safe, for Mr. Verrinder was with her. But Mr. Verrinder's idea of the shortest way home was peculiar, not to say zig-zaggy, and given to falling back upon itself in curves. They found themselves at last, however, strolling up the steep incline of Patrick's Hill, and just then, Patsey's dear bells fell to pealing in the valley that lay like an outstretched picture below.

"How sweet they are!" said Elsie, lingering a moment by the low stone wall.

"Yes," said Verrinder, looking absolutely idiotic, "deuced sweet—er—I like to hear them, don't you know? They—er—sound like——"

But Elsie turned upon him like a young fury, and was just about to tell him that he let his imagination run away with him, and that it would be all very well to hint at wedding bells a hundred years hence or so; when instead, she gave a little scream and shrunk up against his side.

Something that had lain curled in the dust in the angle of the wall, rose and faced them—something that was doubtless human, yet hardly looked so. A shrunken form, from whose palsied limbs fell tattered clothing; an eldritch face, ashen-coloured, with the skin stretched tightly over the bones, and eyes sunken, yet glowing under bushy brows; and long white elf-locks floating on the bowed shoulders.

"For the love av God—for the love av God!" and a claw-like hand was held out, the fingers working with eager longing.

Elsie fumbled for her purse, but Verrinder laid a small silver coin in the outstretched palm, and stood sturdily between his love and the sinister figure of the beggar.

The creature peered round, pointing at the shrinking girl.

"There's love in life, but there's sorrow, too, an' death, an' darkness, an' them that sing in the mornin' will cry before night. Holy Mary, Mother av God, pray for us!"

This sad diatribe was chanted rather than spoken, the voice acrid, husky, terrible. At the last words the creature fell upon its knees in the dust, then dropped as before into a heap of rags.

Pale and saddened, strangely silent, Elsie and her lover took their way home. What blight had fallen on the first sunny day of their love?

It was arranged that Verrinder should see Major Henneker on the morrow, and then the two parted, and Elsie was soon in her own snug room, where Alison was already arranging her hair.

The two made a pretty picture in the mirror, as Elsie's arms stole round her cousin's neck.

"Alison, I'm going to take the Queen's shilling after all."

"Oh, my darling!"

"But I don't think we shall have much else to live upon—he and I!"

When Alison went down to the drawing-room she found Captain Dennison and the doctor chatting with the Major.

"Let us have some tea, my child," said the latter, and then the chat was resumed, and all went merry as a marriage bell.

Except with Hugh Dennison. His hand shook as he took the cup Alison proffered, and his eyes rested softly and sadly on her face. He had often fancied himself in love, but now he knew the difference. Dennison had found his ideal—found the woman whose whole nature was profoundly true, and exquisitely tender. But she would not yield herself to him to raise his life heavenward, and give him to drink of the chalice of a perfect joy. He had meant to keep away from her altogether, but she drew him as the magnet draws the steel. She could not be all his own; but he might share her sweetness with the rest of the world. He would take what he could get. He was conscious of some nervous tension about the girl this afternoon; but, of course, he could not know her whole

soul was thrilled through and through with Elsie's happiness. He could only watch the sweet, changing face, and pray that all was well.

"Is this not a golden day?" she said presently. "It is hard to realise that autumn is really here—so still, so sunny everything seems—and fancy having the window wide open like this; it is a bit of summer come back to us again."

A silence followed, as, naturally enough, they all looked out into the sunlit square, and in that moment a sound—the clear, sharp "ping" of a rifle-shot, so clear that it almost seemed to whistle past their ears, cut the stillness like a knife.

The men started to their feet.

"Good Heaven! it is in the square," shouted the Major. "Some one is shot." And he and the doctor were down the stairs in an instant.

Dennison lingered a moment. Alison had not spoken, but she was white as a lily, and in her eyes a great fear.

Before he could find a word that might comfort her, Blizzard, bounding up three steps at a time, came in like a bombshell.

"They said Musters was here," he cried panting.

"He is just gone. What is it, Blizzard?" and Dennison moved to the door, speaking softly. "Is any one down?"

"Yes; Colour-Sergeant number one company shot through the lungs."

Then Blizzard fled, intent upon being of use somehow; while Dennison, turning to say a word of farewell, heard a faint, strangled cry, and in a moment Alison Drew, falling with a heavy thud, lay senseless at his feet.

## JUGGLING.

It is a commonplace to remark on the vicissitudes through which the meanings and the dignity of words are wont to pass. Yet there may seem to be a certain appropriateness in the way in which the word "juggler" has been turned practically inside out. Nowadays, of course, to "juggle" is to deceive, and in this sense the verb was first used by Milton. Tennyson even makes a substantive of it, and speaks of a "juggle born of the brain." Really, however, the word is but a phonetic corruption of "joculator"—merrymaker—the title of an important official in the Courts of old. This again is a synonym for "Gleeman," which was the Saxon name

for one who rejoiced Kings and nobles with all the combined arts of the minstrel and the tumbler. How highly favoured these entertainers were may be seen from an entry in Domesday Book, to the effect that one Berdic, Jocolator to William the Conqueror, was rewarded for his services by the gift of three towns and five carucates of land near Gloucester. The simplest form of amusement provided by these officials consisted in tumbling and dancing, such as were long ago sung by Homer in his account of the joint wedding breakfasts of the son and daughter of Menelaus. In later times the Greeks delighted in witnessing performances of this nature; but it was not considered proper for a freeborn gentleman to be himself proficient in them. A story told by Herodotus forms an amusing contrast to the ideas and practice of the present day, when, as the play says, "charity uncovers a multitude of shins," and the high-road to matrimony in certain circles is best traversed by exceeding high leaps and much kicking up of "clocked" ankles.

Clisthenes, King of Sicyon, wished to marry his daughter Agariste well and fitly. Accordingly he summoned the most proper young men from all Greece, and entertained them for a year in order to test their characters. At last, before making his choice known, he gave a banquet, at which one of the most favoured of the assembled suitors, Hippoclide by name, took advantage of a pause in the proceedings to exhibit his agility. First he danced the Spartan measure, then the Attic; then he called for a table, and, poising himself on his head thereon, kept time to the music with his feet. Clisthenes, meanwhile, was greatly troubled; he endured the first two performances, but the third was too much. Restraining himself "lest he should break out upon him," he said, "Son of Tisander, thou hast danced away thy wife." Hippoclide replied with the Greek equivalent for "What's the odds?" and Agariste's hand was bestowed elsewhere.

If the word juggling—except in its meaning of deception—were not almost obsolete, a real distinction might be drawn between it and conjuring. Properly, a juggler may be said to do that which seems difficult without concealing his method, while a conjurer does that which seems impossible without revealing his method. In the former case merely a high degree of physical skill is required,

while in the latter, mechanical contrivances and apparatus are well-nigh indispensable. However, juggling in the Middle Ages was inevitably associated with enchantment of some kind.

Sir John Mandeville, after describing a performance before the Great Cham, remarks: "And be it done by craft or necromancy I wot not." Tregetour or tragetour was another name for juggler, derived from a Norman-French word "tres-getter," to cozen. Chaucer relates how he "sawe playenge, jogelours, magyciens, tragetecours, phetonysses, charmeresses, olde witches and sorceresses." A contemporary but anonymous writer says in bewilderment: "Outher a tregettour he most be, Or ellis God himself is he."

The accounts of Edward the Second's household contain an entry showing that twenty shillings were given to "Janino the King's tregetour for performing his minstrelsy before the King." Until Henry the Eighth's time there was always a King's juggler in the Palaces; but the profession then fell into disrepute, until in Elizabeth's reign a juggler is classed among "ruffians, blasphemers, thieves, vagabonds, Heretics, Jews, Pagans and sorcerers," and the post was abolished. A little later, again, the title of "hocus pocus" was conferred in ridicule and contempt upon this sort of person. Though no longer subsidised by Royalty, tumbling and acrobatic displays still continued popular, and it is chronicled with some care that the saturnine Queen Mary, on a visit with Cardinal Pole to Greenwich Park, witnessed the antics of a tumbler, "whereat she was observed to laugh heartily." At the coronation of Edward the Sixth, a man balanced himself on his chest upon a rope stretched from the battlements of old St. Paul's steeple to the ground in front of the Dean's housegate, and so slid to earth; while a precursor of the modern "Steeple Jack" stood upon the weathercock of the Cathedral and waved a streamer. Not content with their own performances alone, jugglers or tumblers devoted much attention to teaching dogs, apes, bears, and other animals—perhaps the "boxing kangaroo" and the "wrestling lion" of to-day are only instances of the force of heredity!—to dance and imitate all manner of human actions. It is to this practice that the well-known proverb, "Man pays in money, the ape in gambols," owes its origin. For in the reign of Saint Louis a toll had to be

paid for all animals entering Paris, and the only exception was made in favour of the juggler, who was allowed to take his animal through on making it exhibit its accomplishments.

Scott, in his "Discoveries of Witchcraft," published in 1584, makes mention of almost all the best known tricks of to-day with cards, coins, and balls, and he also goes to considerable trouble to explain on other grounds than those of sorcery many wonders which would more strictly be called conjuring than juggling. Some of these were managed, he says, by "perspective glasses," others by arranging matters beforehand or by working with confederates. As an instance of the comparative simplicity of many apparently miraculous performances, the case of one Powel may be quoted. This man, about 1760, was in the habit of broiling a piece of beefsteak on his tongue. A lump of lighted charcoal was placed under, and a piece of steak over, his tongue; a spectator then blew upon the former until the meat was cooked. That is the story, and an explanation may be found in the fact that the human skin can be protected temporarily from the action of fire by being rubbed with alum or even soap.

Of the more proper kinds of juggling there have been and still are famous professors. Mr. Maskelyne, at the present time, spins plates and dishes to the most marvellous degree of perfection. In order to perform this feat, nothing is needed, as he tells his spectators, except seven years' practice of seven hours a day, and the best wash-hand basin and dinner service. The famous Robert Houdin must also be classed among the jugglers, for he prepared himself for the eminence to which he attained as a conjurer by learning from a corn-curer, named Maous, to keep four balls at once in the air, while reading a book all the while with comfort. Houdin says that so thoroughly did he learn this art that, after the lapse of thirty years without touching the balls, he could still keep three of them going while he read. It was a curious chance which determined Houdin's career. As he showed great fondness for mechanical contrivances, he was apprenticed when quite a boy to a watchmaker, and was sent one day to buy Berthoud's "Treatise on Clockmaking." By mistake the shopman gave him a volume of an encyclopedia containing descriptions of scientific amusements. Houdin was fascinated, and decided at once upon his profession. He

owned as master in the art of conjuring the celebrated Torrini, whose real name was the Count de Grisay. This man may be said to have juggled a Pope. He was giving an exhibition before Pius the Seventh, and begged the Pope to write something on a piece of paper, which he would burn and restore again. Half incredulous, the Holy Father wrote: "I have much pleasure in stating that Monsieur le Comte de Grisay is an amiable sorcerer." The paper was duly burnt, and afterwards appeared intact in Torrini's hand. The Pope was delighted, and allowed the juggler to keep his autograph testimonial. In 1886 there were in London three excellent jugglers of foreign extraction, named Cinquevalli, Katnoschin, and Trewy. By-the-bye, the first-named is again with us at the present time. Some of their performances were very marvellous. Cinquevalli, for instance, took a knife, a fork, and a potato, and, after passing them from hand to hand several times, threw them all into the air. He then caught the fork in his right hand, spiked the potato on the prongs, and balanced the knife on its point in the potato. Trewy, again, would balance on his chin a rod, having a long cross-piece upon which small pieces of cardboard were placed. Taking a pea-shooter, he proceeded to hit each of them off with small pellets.

Exhibitions such as these are not now in much vogue, but any one who keeps his eyes open at fairs, race-meetings, and other popular gatherings may still see very good proofs of extraordinary quickness and accuracy of hand and eye, accompanied sometimes by excellent original patter. Does this bring to mind the story in Xenophon of the juggler whose chief and fervent prayer was that his lot might be cast in places where there was much money and many simpletons?

### WINTER IN HOLLAND.

THEY do not, in the provinces of Holland, make quite enough provision for your comfort during the frigid winter's nights in the hotels. It is a trial to sleep between the ice-cold sheets of your bed at night. But it is much more of a trial when the waiter the next morning hammers hard at your door, and intimates to you that it is time to step forth into the freezing air of your bed-chamber.

Everything is rigid. How in the world,

you ask yourself, as your teeth chatter in your head, can you wash with a sponge as hard as the bedstead, with half an inch of solidity on the water of your jug, and your fingers in two minutes so numb that you can hold nothing fast, while the buttoning of collar to shirt and the other processes of dressing are as painful physically as they are trying to the temper?

They are a Spartan set of fellows in North Holland, and do not steep you in comforts in the winter-time. Even when you get downstairs, red-nosed and petulant, the odds are that the stove in the dining-room is surrounded with large-bodied Hollanders, who are not at all proper distributors of warmth. These gentlemen will probably be smoking bad cigars and expectorating. If they are talking excitedly, depend upon it there is something doing in the butter and beast market. Either yet one more shipping outlet is frozen up, or, perchance, some iniquitous merchant is trying his hand at a corner in butter or beasts, to the vexation of all-honest traders.

However, the waiter shuffles in with the white napkin on his arm, and genially shows his teeth to you as he whispers the morning salutation and suggests breakfast. If he is a very communicative and enthusiastic youth, he prattles to you while setting before you the various dried slices of meats which you are expected to consume. There is an ice contest in the neighbourhood. So-and-So and So-and-So are to meet in a skating match for a gold medal and so many score of guilders. It is a very great occasion indeed. There are special trains from places fifty miles away, and it will be an absurd oversight on your part if you do not go to the course as soon as you have tossed the hot coffee down your throat.

But the hot coffee is rather long in appearing. The selfish Dutchmen at the stove do not budge, and the blue eddies of their cigars curl upwards in excited wreaths towards the painted ceiling. The newspapers do not attract you, unless you too are as keen as the country folk about butter and ice-champions. Besides, they are hard to read, if, as is probable, your knowledge of printed Dutch is limited.

And so you impatiently scale six or seven square inches of ice from the window of the room, which looks upon the street, and seek diversion in the outer scenes. The houses of trim red and yellow brick, with their staircase gables, cloaked pre-

cisely in nice white snow, upon which the pallid gold of the January sunlight shines mildly, are pretty enough to behold. Quite likely, too, as you peer forth, you meet the eyes of a chubby, sympathetic Dutch maiden or full-blown citizeness in her room opposite. The lady, you perceive, has a retreat as snug and congenial as can be. The tall forms of sub-tropical plants flank her at the window—unfailing indications that the temperature of her room is very agreeable. She has also a subtle arrangement of mirrors outside the window, so that sitting by the double panes she can see a great deal of what happens in the street both ways. No wonder the dear soul is able to meet your gaze with an expression of serene self-satisfaction that is never unbecoming, and which in your situation enhances to you such beauty as she may possess.

But even pretty Dutch maidens have tiresome plagues of little brothers. Why, you ask yourself, did this particular round-faced damsel with the large, innocent eyes suddenly throw her head backwards and disappear into the comparative gloom of the interior of the room? Was it from stress of indignation at meeting your unamiable gaze? Not a bit of it. For a moment later she retakes her stand, with slightly flushed cheeks; and she smooths as best she can the dishevelled, straw-coloured pigtail of hair which hangs so bewitchingly between her shoulder-blades. A fat-faced boy now stands demurely by her side, looking as harmless as the moon. He pulled her pigtail a moment ago, and, probably, in a minute or two he will pull it again.

At this hour the milkmen and maids are in the ascendant. How their polished cans glow in the frosty air! You can almost see the street reflected in their bright sides. And the cheeks of the milk-vendors are as apple-red as the cans are lustrous. Tinkle, tinkle, sound the bells, as the milk goes this way and that. The big, thick-coated dogs which draw the little carts do not seem a bit affected by the thirty degrees of frost in the air. They plump down in the powdery snow whenever they think they can snatch half a minute's repose, and loll their red tongues—enveloped in the vapour of their breath—as if it were August instead of mid-winter.

Having toasted his boots to the cracking point, one of the huge Dutchmen now recedes from the stove and makes civil advances to you. But his husky observa-



tions about the weather are not very welcome, and at the waiter's invitation you speed to your coffee as a much more attractive subject.

No sooner is breakfast over than the charm of the Dutch winter gets hold of you. Warmed within, you laugh at the cold. Your skates are to hand—yonder three young collegians, home for the vacation, are arguing about them as they stand at the coat-rack and compare them with the approved but clumsy runners of Friesland. The waiter has joined the collegians, and has already pointed towards you with a discreet token of respect. The scholars are deterred by no false or constitutional modesty from straightway accosting you as you approach to take up your blades. They are burning for information as to their price and special features. The upshot is that you form a fourth in their party, and all four of you hie forth into the nipping air to make tracks for the ice-course.

The students are admirably clothed for ice-exercise. The short, dark jacket, double-breasted and elegantly frogged, harmonises with the black knee-breeches tied with ribbons. The little sealskin caps on their heads are of course, too, quite the most befitting accompaniment of the rest of their attire. They carry no sticks. It is by no means the vogue in Friesland to encumber the hands. These are either deep in the pockets, folded across the chest, or tightly clasped in the small of the back. Though there is much that is grotesque and unshapely among the Dutchmen of the large towns, you will find nowhere more satisfying figures of manhood than in the northern parts of the kingdom. For this it seems only reasonable to render homage to the winter's ice.

The ice-course is a mile from the town, away among the bleak heathery moorlands. It is a swamped meadow, garnished with cord railings, Venetian maats, with the flags of the nations clinging limply to them—thank goodness there is no wind!—two or three sheds for the sale of gin and ham sandwiches, a bandstand, in which five men, with flame-coloured cheeks and with woollen comforters to the lips, alternately discourse in frenzied bursts of melody, and blow into their hands and beat their chests with their arms; and about five thousand spectators at one-and-eightpence each have already assembled on the meadow to see the much-desired race.

The three students have learnt a little

English at Leyden, which quite absolves you from the need to mould what you flatter yourself—too often in vain—are both scholarly and intelligible Dutch sentences. They are good-natured fellows, like youths of their age and standing all the world over. Twice at their invitation ere you reach the course you drink gin with them. It is but a thimbleful at a time; but you learn thus how easy it is for the humble colporteur and men of his kind to squander in spirits the winter's earnings which ought to have been consecrated to wife and family.

You skate from the town to the course by the canal. The canal has been thus a highway since the middle of November. In both sides of it, near the town, a number of big-bowed green and black boats are frozen up; but the average Dutch boatman will not desert his home merely because it is transformed into a species of iceberg. The smoke curls upwards from his little cabin, and a row of stiff socks and stockings on a line between his chimney and what you may call his mainmast tells of the numerous offspring, who also have to live in the ice for a few months.

The canal ice is not so good as it might be. It is strong enough for anything. Mark, for example, yonder big dray laden with furniture, and crowned by an old woman nursing a baby—it is either a baby or a baby-shaped woollen bundle. With the men that draw it, the entire burden must be something in tons. Yet the ice does not even creak under the weight. But there is one fell consequence of this sort of traffic and that of the various market sledges, with sails set in the direction of the wind—all of which use the canal for their winter highway. The ice is cut into deep ruts like an English country road in the wet season. This is not at all desirable for the mere pleasure-seeker. It entails constant caution, and not a few stinging tumbles in spite of the utmost care.

"Behold, sir," exclaims the most literate of the three students as the outskirts of the town are reached, and the tall whited spire of the town church now shows to the best advantage, domineering over the red and yellow houses of the citizens.

It is not the church that you are bidden to behold, but the splendour of the local "barn," or ice-course. Each country town in North Holland thinks its own course one of the finest in the realm. The weakness is a very excusable one.

But as at that moment four peasant girls come speeding towards you hand-in-hand, swaying with abundant grace from side to side, and with the dull sunlight gleaming on their silver skull-caps, you are loth to give all your attention to the trivial arrangement of poles and flags and sheds which constitute this particular "barn."

"Look out!" you suddenly cry; but you are too late. The courteous young student, in his anxiety that you shall form a thorough idea of the magnificence of the "barn" of his native place, is blind to the advance of the helmeted maidens. The crash is terrific. The student's head rings loudly on the ice. The maidens laugh and reel for an instant. Their capsize also seems inevitable. But no. There is safety in numbers, on the ice as elsewhere, and ere the stupefied student has collected himself adequately again, they—the immediate cause of his downfall—are speeding on towards the orange-coloured sun, but little above the horizon of white fields, low-browed farmhouses, and Lilliputian trees.

"My head," observes the victim of their prowess with deliberation, "is not so much hard as the ice. I feel pain at it."

"In it," you suggest.

"I thank you. Yes; I would say 'in it.' You are very obliging to—to—"

But the effort to obtain coherent English from his aggrieved brain is too much for the poor young man, and he comes to a stop with a smile.

Another party of peasant girls approaches, singing as they glide along. This time you and the students give them a clear passage, of which they avail themselves with merry recognition in their eyes, and cheeks knowingly dimpled. As you live, one of these rustic damsels glitters with a golden headpiece!

"Oh, yes," murmurs the most intelligent of the students in reply to your enquiry on the subject. "It is without doubt a thing received from a gross parent—grandparent, is it not? It is in the family. They possess them of the value of two thousand guilders. It is not to be believed, and it is true—on my word."

From the canal we tramp across a snow-bound field or two, thickly dotted with black rooks and grey-headed ravens, and so come upon the course.

A heat is just beginning. There is a subdued hum of excitement from the crowd. The officials in control of the

meeting move about majestically within the restricted lines, some wearing medals indicative of their own abilities as icemen, and some clad in lordly furred jackets which give them a distinguished appearance. They all hold watches in their hands, and follow with absorbed eagerness the progress of the two competitors who have been sent off.

Another minute and the clamour intensifies. It is a close race. Both men are bowed almost double. They do not look very well in this attitude, but the posture seems to aid them. And thus they rush almost neck and neck over the goal-line amid the resonant plaudits of the bystanders.

Then follows a brief but energetic dispute between a furred official and another gentleman. They disagree as to the fraction of a second. However, the referee interferes and reconciles them outwardly; though each goes his own way unconvinced. It makes a great difference whether you win your heat by two-thirds of a second or three-quarters of a second.

The crowd and the excitement conjoined soon separate you from your student friends. These have a hundred acquaintances on the course. They are exceedingly anxious to introduce you—or rather your skates—to certain of their comrades. But, being of an unobtrusive disposition, you are not eager to become the cynosure of a hundred curious rather than admiring or even respectful pair of eyes, and so you allow circumstances to whirl you away from the courteous youths.

The races are not to you a very great affair. You do not know Dirk from Jan, nor Hans from Peter. Therefore, when you have seen three or four heats, and noticed the same disputation about the fractions of a second at the end of each of them, you glide hither and thither at your own sweet will.

It is a pity the Dutchmen pollute the fine strong air with so much pestilential tobacco. Most of their cigars are of the kind for which you pay a penny for five. As fast as they smoke one they light another, so that it is possible in an afternoon's brisk movement to consume two-pennyworth of the articles.

This it is, no doubt, that compels towards the consumption of so much gin. You find your way into one of the refreshment booths, and take your thimbleful with the rest. If you are hungry, there is plenty of half-raw meat between slabs of bread to

regale upon. There are also portly cubes of cake, which the girls with the silver headgear and white lace over—making them look like grandmothers while still in their teens—eat in no half-hearted manner. There is not much that is false about the average Dutch girl of the north, from the teeth and hair of her head to her red cheeks and childlike nature.

After a couple of hours you are content to leave Hans, Dirk, Jan, Peter, and the others to fight their battles unhonoured by your presence. The short January day has begun to set downhill. The sky is a dusky red in the west, and by the numbness of your fingers and nose you know full well that the thermometer is briskly lowering again for a bitter night.

Wherefore you return to the canal, resolved to have an hour's spin into the country on your own account ere returning to the town and your indifferent hotel, with its rather coarse dinner-table and very coarse Dutch commercial travellers clustered round the stove.

It is a bracing, hearty experience. You are going the way of the market carts and sledges this time, and can easily out-pace them. Still, it is humiliating, as you speed along at what you are convinced is a most creditable rate, to be overtaken by a weather-beaten old dame with a basket on her head. She gives you a severely restrained nod as she passes. It is as clear as anything that she has but a poor opinion of your craft as an iceman.

Of landscape you do not get much that is engrossing here in North Holland. It is so in summer and winter alike. Two or three church spires in the distance, betokening hamlets; any number of stumpy farmhouses, frost-bound in all their parts; and the above-mentioned trees; these almost exhaust the details of your surroundings.

But they do not quite exhaust the list. One other feature insists on recognition. North Holland, indeed Holland everywhere, would be duller than it is were it not for its windmills. They are of many kinds and colours: chestnut-brown, green, white as the snow around them, black as your boots, primrose-hued, or a watery scarlet; and with bases shaped housewise, boatwise, or in various hybrid ways. Whether their sails be sweeping round with that inimitable grace of theirs, or they are standing still, they are always welcome objects. In their neighbourhood, too, are sure to be not a few frosted sheep,

and companies of birds more numerous than elsewhere.

The hour's run outwards is wholly pleasurable. Not so the return. By this time the baby moon has come into emphatic existence, and the red sun has sunk into the effulgence of misty crimson and gold in the west. The ruts in the ice are not now so readily avoided—nor are the carts and peasants, returning home after their day in town.

It is only to be expected, therefore, that you capsize prone upon the canal three or four times ere you again get into the compass of the town, with its frost-bound boats and quaint little bridges, under which you have to duck discreetly if you do not wish to split your already aching skull. The school-children have taken possession of the canal precincts within the town, and their merry shouts echo up and down the placid streets wherever the waterway goes.

There is something unique about the aspect of these little towns under the starlight. The effect upon you is as tranquillising as a camp in the desert.

"Well, mynheer," says the aproned master of the hotel as you take your place at the dinner-table, "haf you hat goot day?"

"Very good day," you reply. Then down falls the master's carving-knife upon the red joint, and the big Dutchmen, your companions, tuck their napkins into their necks and glower at the meat until their turn comes.

## MISTRESS SARAH'S ROMANCE.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

SHE was mostly called "Mistress Sarah." Even the Rector had fallen into the prevalent habit. Her surname was Bugge, which, it was generally conceded in the parish, had an uncivil sound—as applied to a lady. And yet the family had been established in Gusserton for centuries. If you had good eyes and a taste for such exploration, you might in the Gusserton churchyard have discovered divers stunted brown stone monuments, with cherubs and trumpets, bearing seventeenth-century dates and the name of Bugge. But in those days they seem to have spelled the name with only one "g," which of course, however, was only to be ascribed to laziness in the stonemason.

Mistress Sarah was fifty—"a middlin'

age for a woman," as the landlady of the "Hoppers' Arms" once said, with especial reference to Miss Buggs. She was small and stout, without being unwieldy. Unwieldy, indeed! A woman who kept the old Red House Farm going as she did could hardly be unwieldy. It was often accounted a wonder that she did not dispose of it, and retire to a state of comfortable and respected private independence in the Cathedral Close of Bester, only ten miles away. That is what nine maiden ladies out of ten, circumstanced as she was, would surely have done. But Mistress Sarah was not a common woman.

She had kindly grey eyes, dark hair, a mouth that looked far more positive than it really was, and a complexion that still possessed much of its earlier beauty.

At twenty, Mistress Sarah had been "somethin' worth lookin' at!" So the old folk of Gusserton said, though the newer generation scoffed at such talk.

She lived all alone in the Red House. That is to say, she had servants enough, but no blood relative to take off the chill of her solitude. It was a marvellous thing to most folks why she had rejected suitor after suitor during her prime—say from four-and-twenty to five-and-thirty. Her father was alive in those days, and had been made quite testy by this strange conduct. He did not like to leave the Red House property to a daughter, but there was no help for it, since he had not a son. He liked infinitely less to think of its eventual transmission to alien hands after the death of his Sarah, unwedded.

It was a charming old residence—three-storeyed, with stone mullions and a stone balustrade at the roof-line. Its façade was draped with roses, wisteria, and Virginia creeper, which each in their season made it a sight to warm the cockles of an artist's heart. On either side of it were low green hills; behind it was a coppice, sloping gently backwards; in front you approached it by a drive between undulating pasture-land, set about with just enough spreading old oaks and chestnut-trees to give the idea, without the conviction, of a park. For a mere farmhouse it was, in fact, a fine place. And the white cowls of the huge kilns, and the extensive mellowed out-buildings adjacent on the one side, added to its attractiveness.

Such was the abode in which Mistress Sarah enjoyed her single blessedness. Even at fifty she might have got a husband with little effort, if she had wished.

Two scenes in the lady's life in earlier days explain sufficiently her standpoint. They were both still so fresh in her retentive mind that they may be described as having occurred but yesterday.

It was a bright September morning; such a day as the hop-farmer loves to see, especially if his yards are packed with the human riff-raff of town and country who represent his hop hands. The Red House hop-fields were full of promise; the cones crisp and large; no blight anywhere; and ten acres more under cultivation than in any year previously mentioned in the domestic annals. Farmer Buggs was a happy man, and his daughter, "beautiful Miss Sarah," as the dependents who loved her called her, was even happier than her father in the strong pride of his health, and strength, and worldly well-being.

Miss Sarah had risen at half-past five, and by six was out in the keen fresh air and the dewy grass. She stole through the shrubbery and across the orchard, and ere the Gusserton church tower had tinkled six o'clock she was in the arms of her hero, the immaculate, the glorious and incomparable Michael.

Michael Nethersleigh was the only son of Farmer Nethersleigh, of Bowstoke. He was handsome as a man need be to win a maiden heart, dissipated, and thirty. His reputation in the district was bad—in the Bowstoke district, that is. Bowstoke is ten miles from Gusserton. But what cared the pretty Sarah for the lies the world told about him, so long as she knew from his own lips that she was his darling, the only girl he had ever really loved, and the maiden who—and he would swear it, looking magnificent the while—was meant by heaven and earth to be his wife?

They had often met, these two, during the last six months. Farmer Buggs fancied the recent brightness in his girl's eyes was due to the new health she obtained from a wonderful new corset, or something of that kind. He knew nothing about Michael Nethersleigh except what he heard at the farmers' ordinary at Bester and Pachester. What he heard on these occasions was not calculated to raise Michael in his regard—especially if old Nethersleigh's place at table was vacant.

Michael and Sarah had kissed, and looked in each other's eyes, and kissed again, ere the girl broached the subject that was nearest her heart.

"You know you promised," she mur-

mured, "and on my birthday you can't refuse."

"I'll not refuse, you can take your oath," replied the other.

"Well, then, you've got to come back with me and tell father all about it. I do so want him to know. He will be glad, Michael, when he sees who you are."

But Michael did not seem to think so. Much persuasion was needful to exorcise from him the sudden gloom that got hold of him; and very much more afterwards to induce him to submit to the guidance of Sarah's fairy fingers, which gripped him so lovingly by the arm.

It came about at length, however. The young man fastened his eyes on the girl, and for a moment or two there was something of real nobility in his expression as he said tremulously, and with ill-restrained passion:

"If only the old man would see it, you'd be the making of me, my little darling!"

Sarah liked these words so well that she stood on tiptoe to kiss the lips that had uttered them. Her grey eyes sparkled with joy. Of course "the old man" would see it—especially on her birthday!

But disillusionment came all too soon. Michael Netheraleigh's instinct had not played him false.

They were approaching the farmhouse by the orchard, openly and hand in hand—an idyllic spectacle—when Farmer Bugge faced them, riding-whip in hand, and with his legs set apart as if he meant to keep his balance. The pretty Sarah had just time to whisper: "Now, be bold," when her father broke from his attitude of amazement and fell upon the pair.

"Take yourself off," he cried, pointing with the leather of his whip at young Netheraleigh.

"But, father——" began Sarah.

And her lover also, having first uncovered his head—an extraordinary token of contrition and humility in him—ventured to exclaim:

"Please to give me a few——"

He had no time to finish, however.

"By Heaven," cried Farmer Bugge, "I'll not stand this. A reptile like you holding my girl's hand!"

The riding-whip crashed upon young Michael's uncovered head—twice. The victim stood to bear the blows. The whip would have descended a third time had not Sarah thrown herself, screaming, into her father's arms. She had fainted.

"I hope some day you will be sorry for this, sir, and I wish you good morning," said young Netheraleigh, who then, with one yearning look at the white shape embarrassing his assailant, turned away and went home—heedless of his fallen hat.

Scene the second is far less sensational.

Eleven hopping seasons have gone by. The "beautiful Miss Sarah" has already grown into "Mistress Sarah." Her father having died three years back, she is ruler at the Red House, and a shrewd though indulgent ruler into the bargain.

There was some trouble with the hop hands. It had been the same the two previous years. This dangerous assemblage of tramps, gipsies, and discontented artisans and iron-workers had struck once more. They wanted to pick five bushels to the shilling instead of six. They fancied they might do as they pleased with a woman for the "gaffer."

Mistress Sarah girded herself for the combat, put on her spectacles—it was too early in her life for the thing, but she did not now think much about her personal appearance—and with a sun-hat on her head, and attended by her trusty man Joseph, went forth to do battle with the malcontents.

And she beat them, too. The year had not been a good one. The Red House Farm balance was like, indeed, to be on the wrong side. Both mould and "aphis" had been sadly at work on the bines, and the weather for the picking had not thus far been kind.

"My friends," she said to the ring-leaders of the revolt, "I am sorry I cannot give you a bushel less to the shilling this year. As it is, I expect to be a loser on the picking. If you think I am doing you a wrong you must leave off, that's all. You shall be paid according to the schedule, and I'll take my chance of other hands. I shall not mind sacrificing half the harvest. You ought—at least, the experienced ones among you ought—to see what that means."

There was some grumbling, of course, and a good score or two of hands did leave—to drink off their earnings at the "Hoppers' Arms." The others, however, yielded to reason. It was a bad year—there was no denying it. And at any rate, the bushellers had promised not to press the hops tightly while measuring them.

Joseph and his mistress were leaving the fields for the house again, when at a gate in a lane they saw a man and a little

girl. The man looked odd; his mouth moved like one in an epilepsy. Nevertheless, Mistress Sarah's heart bounded at sight of him.

She had neither seen nor heard aught of Michael in the meantime. He had sent her one little letter, telling her that he should come back to claim her when he felt worthy of her. She had waited, and meant to wait. And now her heart told her that the moment had arrived. It was nothing to her staunch, true nature that the man was palpably a wreck of humanity.

"Ask them, Joseph, if they want to join the other pickers," she said. The man turned to look at her to see why her voice sounded so queer. But he did her bidding.

"Yes, indeed," replied the girl, who then told that her companion was a "loony." "He's bin off his head, miss," the child went on to say, "ever since I've had to do w' him."

"Are you his—his daughter?" Mistress Sarah asked, with growing grief at the heart.

"Not me," was the instant and contemptuous answer. "My father's a travelling tinker. I've took up w' him to see if it pays—he has fits that's frightful to see. We made a 'arf-crown, pretty nigh, out of the last."

While the girl spoke, Mistress Sarah scanned the man. There was a long mole on his throat. She knew that mole. There was a slight distortion to the right nostril, and that also she recognised. His eyes she searched in vain. Alas! all the virile pride and glory had gone from them. They were now bloodshot and faded, and eloquent of infinite suffering and degradation. The hands, too, once so strong and so comfortable when clasped about her, were now knotted, and quivering, and miserable to see.

All her first half-anxious doubts left her.

"Joseph," she said, "take this poor fellow into the house—the parlour."

Joseph exclaimed: "The parlour, Miss Sarah?" as he might have uttered a vigorous oath.

"Yes, the parlour," was the reply.

Thus Mistress Sarah regained her heart's idol, and, all shattered and mired though it was by unnameable and unknowable experiences, she joyously—to herself alone—acknowledged her true allegiance to it.

Her secret was her own. She was glad that the dispersal of the Netheraleighs of

Bowstoke put her under no moral compulsion to share it with any one. Michael's father had come down in the world and had died insolvent. No one, except just herself, cared two oat-straws about the discovery of this sheep that was lost.

The Red House domestics and the gossips of Gusserton expressed their surprise at the detention in the farm of this unrepresentable and unmannerly stranger. Decently dressed and cleaned, he looked, of course, more respectable than when Mistress Sarah had first set eyes on him at the field gate. But he was still an outlaw, an alien among mankind. It could not be otherwise. A man who gibbered at his benefactress, and could not walk three steps without risk of collapse, was not likely to be thought much of.

In time he was removed from the farm to a little white cottage at the extremity of the village. The cottage was soothing to see, with its diamond window-panes, its white roses on its walls, and the honeysuckle which, in the summer-time, made its gabled porch a sweet nook to rest in. There were but four rooms to it. Two of these were devoted to Silly Mark, as Gusserton called him. The other two were tenanted by the old dame whom Mistress Sarah paid, and paid well, to look after her pensioner.

Mistress Sarah walked daily from the farm to the cottage. At first, encouraged by medical opinion, she had hoped morning after morning to see the spark of reason show once more in her lover's dulled eyes. But the years went by, and he did not change. At least, he did not change in that direction. He became stout, and his drivel took a funny turn. He would sit, for instance, in the garden and laugh the true idiot's laugh for hours on end. And nothing pleased him better than to have the Gusserton school-children clustered about the palings of his garden, laughing, and egging him on to new imbecilities. But when Mistress Sarah appeared the children would vanish, and leave her to enjoy Silly Mark's pleasantries alone.

It was Mistress Sarah who had suggested that her protégé's name was Mark. She dared not call him Michael in public. And it seemed to matter little, seeing that even when she had him to himself and pleaded with his laggard understanding, addressing him as "Michael," and "dear Michael," she produced no effect. He liked to have her with him, that was evident. The faces he made when they twain were alone would

have enchanted the school-children; but not one iota of intelligence did he show from first to last.

This state of things endured for twenty years. Mistress Sarah's devotion was unique. Gusserton had long grown reconciled to the anomaly of it. Even the Rector—he was of but five years' residence in the village—had ceased to marvel at it.

And so the keen winter of 1890 approached, and instead of sitting in the sunshine among the bees and mignonette, with the pleasant view of the Gusserton valley green and radiant to one side, old Mark sat in his arm-chair and grinned at the red coals in the fire.

The doctor had hinted to Mistress Sarah that the idiot's constitution had weakened of late, and that severe cold would try him seriously. And when the snow came, and a biting frost that turned solid the Gusserton brook as well as the ponds, it was evident that the doctor was right. Silly Mark resented more and more the being drawn from his warm bed in the morning. His limbs seemed to stiffen, and his face grew more and more lack-lustre. Old Mary, who looked after him, did her best with him, but she too confirmed the doctor's belief that he was dwindling away.

They noticed in Gusserton the extraordinary look of anxiety that now became settled upon Mistress Sarah's brave little face. It was visible even through the veil she had come to wear. But none associated it with Silly Mark. That seemed too absurd.

And yet, in the good little woman's heart there was now one great hope omnipresent. It had been told her that people with clouded minds often, when nearing their end, were blessed with an instant or two of sane vision. If only Michael might recognise her, and once press her hand with the touch that means a communication from heart to heart, she would be content, and more than content.

Christmas Day came and went. On Christmas Eve Mistress Sarah had given the sick man a little piece of mistletoe.

"See here, Michael," she had whispered as they sat knee to knee, "there's no one else I would do this for!" and she had kissed the drawn lips beneath the little twig. Afterwards she had given him the sprig, and he had—eaten it, before she could interfere.

"Falling fast," said the doctor, when he saw him the next day. But he did not attribute anything to the mistletoe.

The following morning, while Mistress Sarah was at breakfast, little Betty Graham from the mill scampered through the snow of the Red House drive, to bid Mistress Sarah hurry to the cottage.

"He's going," she said, alluding to Silly Mark.

He seemed, indeed, quite gone when the little lady, trembling and with tears in her eyes, came to his bedside and lifted his white, nerveless hand.

"Will you be wanting me to stay for it?" asked old Mary; and Mistress Sarah said "No."

From nine o'clock until past twelve she sat watching the quiet face, which already seemed settling into the dignified repose of death. His breath just came and went. His eyes did not open. And all the time Mistress Sarah was praying her selfish prayer that she might be recognised.

Between twelve and one she left the room for a moment or two; and old Mary must needs steal in and put a Bible under the idiot's head. She had some old-fashioned notions, and this was one of them.

"He'll go easy now," she said to herself. Hardly had Mistress Sarah re-entered the room, indeed, when Silly Mark stirred in the bed and opened his eyes very wide; the look came into them, and he cried "Ah!" and tried to lift his arms.

That was all.

But it was enough for Mistress Sarah. When old Mary again came in she found the lady sobbing, "Oh, Michael—Michael!" with her face side by side with the dead face on the pillow.

Mistress Sarah enjoyed one more thoroughly contented hour, sitting with her dead lover of past days, and then she returned to the Red House Farm. There she still continues to live. The little cottage is still rented by her, and old Mary is its tenant. Both are, in her esteem, too sacred to pass into other hands.

There is a bright grave in the Gusserton churchyard, with a small head-stone bearing the initials "M. N." No grave is better kept. And Mistress Sarah has left explicit instructions in her will for its maintenance in good order when she, too, rests beneath its trim green coverlet.

## OLD JOKES IN NEW FORMS.

THE world would seem to be very easily satisfied in the matter of its jokes. Though they may be hoar with age, and feeble

about the joints, it takes no objection. It indulgently suffers a sixteenth-century jest to be served up again in the nineteenth, and deigns to laugh. Perhaps the world is of opinion that the quip, epigram, or "bon mot," which outlives the chance and change of two or three hundred years, possesses a certain vitality which entitles it to respect. Perhaps it likes the old familiar faces, even when an attempt is made to smooth down the wrinkles of age and refurbish the faded complexion. At all events, it is obvious enough that many of the "good things" which ever and anon are put into currency as if they were freshly coined, really belong to ancient mints, and have changed hands many a time before they came into ours! For example, here is the original—if, indeed, there be not an older original—of an amusing anecdote which has had more lives than one, and has, I believe, been labelled with several names. A famous "chef de cuisine" revelled in dirt from head to foot, so that not an inch of his corporeality could be described as clean except the tip of his fore-finger, which he was constantly dipping into his sauces to test their flavour. One day his patron said to him: "What dirty hands you have!" "Ah, Monsieur, ce n'est pas rien; you should see my feet!"

To the best of my belief, this story was first published in the "Encyclopédie"; yet it has been associated with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and also with Madame de Staël.

It happened one day that the gallant Chevalier Bussy, having accompanied some ladies to the menagerie at the Tuileries, was invited by the fairest and proudest to recover her glove, which she had dropped into the lion's den. Sword in hand, Bussy entered the pit, and picked up the glove without any menacing movement on the lion's part. Returning it to "la Belle Dame sans Merci," he gave her a slight tap on the cheek, and said: "Take it, and another time do not involve a brave man in a needless risk."

This picturesque incident is related by Tallemant des Réaux in his "Histoire du Comte de Montsoreau." But it is also told by Brantôme, who makes its hero a Marquis de Lorges, and varies the details. This latter version Schiller has expanded into a fine ballad, which Leigh Hunt has imitated, and both Lord Lytton and Sir Theodore Martin have translated. Lord Lytton, by the way, remarks that the

original is in Saint Foix's, "Essai sur Paris." For myself, I think it probable that the story has an Eastern original. It is worthy of note that Robert Browning has also treated the incident, "more suo," putting the narrative into the mouth of Pierre Ronsard.

We are reminded of a favourite form of American humour by the following gasconade. A young Gascon, describing an adventure in which he and his sword had been engaged, confessed to having received a box on the ear. "Oh, and what then?" enquired his hearers. "What then? Oh, the man was buried next day!"

The Duc de Roquelaure was a man of great ugliness and much humour. One day he met in the street a most unlovely-looking Auvergnat, who had some petition or memorial to present at Versailles. He immediately introduced him to Louis the Fourteenth, remarking that he was under a special obligation to him. The King granted the favour asked for, and then enquired of the Duke what might be the nature of the obligation. "But for him, your Majesty, I should be the ugliest man in your dominions!"

I am reminded of Heidegger, the manager of the Opera House in the Haymarket, when George the Second was King. One day he laid a wager with the Earl of Chesterfield that he would not find in all London an uglier face than his. After a long search the Earl produced a woman of St. Giles's, who, at first, seemed to outvie the manager; but when the latter put on the woman's headgear, his superior ugliness was at once admitted.

It would be uncharitable, perhaps, to describe Fontenelle as impious, but it must be confessed that he showed himself as indifferent on religious matters as on things mundane. I am not sure, however, but that there was a good deal of truth in his answer to the priest who remarked in his hearing that "God had made man in his own image." "Ay," said Fontenelle, "and man has returned the compliment."

Only, the strange thing is that the very same answer has been put into the mouth of Heine.

A certain Bishop of Quebec, in the days when Canada was French, strayed into the forests, and disappeared. A party sent in search of him fell in with a company of Indians, the picturesque Redskins idealised by Fenimore Cooper, and enquired of them if they knew the missing prelate. "Knew him!" said one of them; "I helped to



eat him!" Certainly, intimacy could hardly be carried further! But I may point out that similar jests are of frequent occurrence in both French and English jest-books, and perhaps were not wholly unknown to Sydney Smith when he talked of "cold boiled missionary on the side-board."

The humorist Santeuil sometimes returned to his monastery at a much later—or earlier—hour than became a man in his position. One night, when he presented himself at the gate of Saint-Victor after eleven, the porter refused to open it, having, he said, been strictly forbidden to do so. After repeated solicitations and as many declinations, our poet slipped a half-louis under the gate, and bolt and bar were immediately withdrawn. As soon as he was inside, he pretended that he had left a book on the stone seat where he had kept vigil. The porter obligingly stepped out for it, and Santeuil immediately closed the gate upon him. Master Peter, who was only half-dressed, knocked lustily at the door. "I dare not open it," replied Santeuil. "Monsieur le Prieur has forbidden me." "Ah, Monsieur de Santeuil, I opened it for you." "Yes, and I will let you in on the same terms." The porter returned the half-louis and was admitted.

This incident has been Anglicised by George Colman, and put into verse. Santeuil becomes an undergraduate, and the locale is transferred to one of the colleges at Cambridge.

La Mothe d'Orléans, Bishop of Amiens, was in attendance, with several other prelates, on Madame Louise de la Vallière, some time after that Princess had made her vows. The prelate stood apart, and seemed to take no interest in the airy conversation that fluttered round her. At last Madame Louise asked him the subject of his reverie.

"Ah, madame, I was dreaming that I was in Paradise, and that some one having knocked at the gate, Saint Peter asked who it was. 'A Carmelite,' was the reply. 'Let her enter.' A few moments, and there was another knock; the same enquiry, the same reply. There came a third rapping. 'Who is that?' 'A Carmelite.' 'Eh! Good Heavens! No-body comes here but Carmelites.' After awhile there was a fourth summons at the gate. 'Is that another Carmelite?' 'No, your Saintship, 'tis a Bishop.' 'Ah, ah,' cried Saint Peter, 'he is welcome, for 'tis centuries since a Bishop passed this way.'"

One seems to get a hint of this poignant sarcasm in Byron's "Vision of Judgment":

"And who is George the Third?" replied the Apostle:  
"What George? What Third?" "The King of England," said  
The Angel. "Well, he won't find Kings to jostle Him on his way."

During the demolitions and excavations which took place at Belleville, near Paris, about the middle of the last century, the workmen came upon a stone, engraved with rude characters, which attracted much attention among antiquaries and archæologists, and was eventually thought worthy of being examined by the members of the Academy of Inscriptions and the *Belles Lettres*. After careful examination they made out the following letters, in the order given; but to what language they belonged, or what was their meaning, not the most learned pundit could conjecture.

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S A N E S

The most competent authorities were consulted, but in vain. At length the beadle of Montmartre, happening to hear of the stone and the difficulty under which the Academicians laboured, asked permission to see it, and immediately solved the problem. The letters, he explained, belonged to a very simple bit of information: "Ici le chemin des ânes"—this is the donkeys' path. Formerly some plaster quarries were worked at Belleville, and the stone had been set up as a guide-post to show the nearest way to the loading-place.

I find this quip upon antiquarian credulity in the "*Mémoires de Bachaumont*," 1779.

Now everybody knows the similar satire in "The Antiquary," when Monkbarns supposed discovery of a Roman *Prætorium* is so rudely upset by Edie Ochiltree. Sir Walter Scott refers to a story of "Keep on this Syde," in the "*Town and Country Magazine*" for 1771, but in his notes mentions that the incident of the *Prætorium* actually happened to an antiquary of great learning and acuteness, Sir John Clark, of Penicuik, one of the Commissioners for the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland. It would therefore appear that the jest is of much earlier origin than the French "*Mémoires*."

Turenne, one day, observing that at each volley from a certain battery some of his soldiers ducked their heads, but drew themselves up again immediately, lest they should be reprimanded, exclaimed: "Mes enfans, there is no harm in what you do; such visitors well deserve an obeisance." This reminds one of the French officer's politeness when he saw a bomb approaching. Leaping aside as it approached, he took off his hat, and bowing low, remarked: "I never dispute precedence with gentlemen of your family."

A certain French poet, who had written verses in honour of Napoleon, after the Restoration poetised in praise of the Bourbons. Having presented his elegantly written couplets to Louis the Eighteenth, the King remarked:

"They are very fine; but I think those were much finer which you dedicated to my predecessor."

"Your Majesty is right," replied the poet, unabashed; "but everybody knows that poets succeed much better in fiction than in reality."

It is certainly a curious coincidence, to say the least of it, that exactly the same reply under the same circumstances should have been made by Edmund Waller to Charles the Second. "When Waller," says Mr. Gosse, "presented the fourth of his panegyrics to Charles the Second, the King made the awkward remark that he thought it much inferior to his panegyric on Cromwell. This double thrust, attacking his loyalty and his poetry at once, would have silenced most men; but Waller extricated himself from the trying position with habitual coolness. 'Sir!' he replied, 'we poets never succeed so well in writing truth as fiction.'"

A curé was examining the children of his parish in their catechism. The first question in the Heidelberg catechism runs as follows: "What is thy only consolation in life and death?" The young girl to whom it fell began to laugh and blush, and declined to reply. The priest insisted. "Well," she said at last, "if I must tell you, it's the young shoemaker in the Rue des Agneaux."

This not very bright joke occurs in the "Mémoires de la Princesse Palatine." Recently I saw it going the rounds as a brand-new joke, adapted to the American market.

Henri Quatre was a lover of "les bons mots" as well as of "les bonnes filles." Halting at a village one day to get

some dinner, he gave orders that whoever was reputed to be the greatest wit should be brought to amuse him during his repast. On the appearance of the rustic prodigy, he commanded him to sit down on the other side of the table.

"What is your name?" enquired the King.

"Sire, my name is Gaillard."

"Hah, and what is the difference between Gaillard and paillard — a lewd fellow?"

"Sire," was the unexpected reply, "there is only the table between them."

"Ventre-saint-gris!" exclaimed Henry, laughing, "he has me there. I never expected to find so much wit in so little a village."

There is a home-made story to the effect that a certain eccentric Archbishop asking a young priest, who was among his guests, what was the difference between a goose and a curate, received the same stinging reply.

An old joke preserved by Tallemant exists in several English versions. This is the way in which Tallemant puts it. Some deputies from the provinces having been admitted to an interview with Cardinal Richelieu, Bautru thought to display his wit at the expense of the elder among them. "Sir, pardon me for interrupting you, but what was the price of asses in your country when you left?" "Those of your size and figure," rejoined the deputy, "fetched ten crowns." It is surprising that men supposed to be practised wits should expose themselves to such easy retorts.

To quote again from the "Mémoires de Bachaumont," ed. 1777. The grand almoner, Roche-Aymon, in his imbecile old age, was complaining of his gout to Dr. Bouvart, and exclaimed that he suffered like one of the damned. "What, already?" — "Quoi, déjà?" — rejoined the malicious physician.

Now Sydney Smith says: "Nobody's wit was of so high an order as Talleyrand's, or has so well stood the test of time. You remember when his friend Montrond was taken ill, and exclaimed, 'Mon ami, je sens les tourmens de l'enfer.' 'Quoi, déjà?' was his reply." But the fact seems to be that Talleyrand simply retorted this bit of malignity as a quotation.

Moore records an anecdote told by Croker as one of the happiest things he had ever heard. Fénelon, who had teased Richelieu without success for subscriptions

to various charities, was telling him one day that he had just seen his picture. "And did you ask it for a subscription?" answered Richelieu. "No; I saw there was no chance; it was so like you." But is not a similar jest connected with Garrick?

Madame Fanny de Beauharnais, endeavouring to acquire a reputation both as poetess and beauty, provoked from Lebrun a bitter epigram:

*La belle Eglé, dit-on, a deux petits travers :  
Elle fait son visage et ne fait pas ses vers.*

This reappears in Byron's poems:

*Egle, beauty and poet, has two little crimes :  
She makes her own face, and does not make her  
rhymes.*

Martial has an epigram: "Sint Mæcenas, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones"—Mæcenas would not be wanting, O Flaccus, if there were Virgils. Now a French chronicler relates that when King John of France had come to Paris, and called his Parliament together, he complained "in a pitiful tone" of his misfortunes and the calamities of his realm. Among the rest he lamented that he could find no more Rolands or Gawains. Whereupon one of his peers, who had been famous for his valour in his youth, and was incensed at the King's slothfulness, replied, There would be no want of Rolands if there were Charlemais. As the French noble could not have read Martial, we may suppose either that the Latin poet's witty saying had been handed down as a proverb, or that the coincidence was purely accidental, which is probably the case.

Here is the original, from the "Ménagiane," of an old joke—a perfect "chestnut." At the last sermon of a mission in a rural district, everybody wept, except one peasant. "And why do you not weep?" he was asked. "Oh, I don't belong to this parish!"

We all remember Puff's ingenious excuse for plagiarism in "The Critic." "Haven't I heard that line before?" enquires Sneer. "Yes," says Dangle, "I think there's something like it in 'Othello.'" "Gad," exclaims Puff, "now you put me in mind on't, I believe there is—but that's of no consequence; all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit upon the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that's all."

I am reminded of Sheridan's witty saying by an epigram of the Chevalier d'Aceilly, dating from the seventeenth century. "Do I say anything tolerably good? Antiquity, in pure imagination, pretends to have said

it before me. She is a jocosse damsel! Why didn't she come after me? Then I should have said my good things first."

I subjoin the French:

*Dis-je quelque chose assez belle ?  
L'antiquité tout en cervelle  
Prétend l'avoir dite avant moi.  
C'est une plaisante donzelle !  
Que ne venait-elle après moi ?  
J'aurais dit la chose avant elle.*

In recommending a candidate for employment, the man's friend remarked, "Everybody must live." "Je n'en vois pas la nécessité," replied Talleyrand.

But this answer had already been made by Monsieur d'Argenson to the Abbé Desfontaines, and put into verse by Piron long before Talleyrand's time. It has also been given as the reply of a French Judge to a thief, who pleaded against being sentenced to death.

It has been the illusion of many of us that "the King is no subject" was a good home-made conundrum; but I read that when Louis the Fifteenth asked the witty Monsieur de Bièvre to invent a riddle, the latter said: "On what subject, sir?" "'N'importe;' on me, if you will." "Mais votre Majesté n'est pas un sujet!"

Another of our favourite facetiæ must be resigned to the land of bons-mots and calembours. The Comte de Clermont d'Amboise, in full dress, and blazing with orders, was waiting for some one to admit him into the stalls of the Théâtre des Français. Seeing a wit of the day, one Martin, surnamed the Cynic, the Duke—who did not know him personally—hastened towards him. "Are you the box-opener, mon cher?" "No; are you?"

The "Genesis of Jokes" may be recommended to the literary archæologist as a subject which has not yet received the attention it deserves.

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER IV.

THE groom and the butler—a negro—both sprang to her assistance. She had struck her temple rather severely against the side of the door. The butler, pompous but kindly, was full of concern.

"Missie hab tolerable bad tumble," he said. "Here is Mrs. Maria; she look after you. What a night, to be suar!" turning away to shut the heavy oaken door, in which he was assisted by the groom.

An elderly woman, also of negro extraction, came hurrying forward from the back of the hall. If her manner were less dignified, she spoke better English than the butler, and after a first astonished glance into the pale young face, she warmed into motherly fussiness which went straight to the heart of the tired, lonely girl.

"How is Mrs. Anson?" asked the butler in a low voice, as she turned away for a moment to give some order about Leila's luggage. "Mr. Hesketh—he come home in a debil of a bad temper. He just mad wid indignation."

"She's better," the woman answered hastily, in the same lowered voice. "But it has been a bad attack this time. Will you please follow me, miss?" aloud to Leila, who, standing listlessly by, had just caught a few words.

She led the way to the oak staircase, at the farther end of the hall. The hall was very handsome, warm, and bright, with two great fires, and several lamps. The brilliance of the illumination contrasted vividly with the darkness outside. Indeed, brightness and warmth pervaded the whole house, giving a general sense of comfort and luxury to Leila as she followed her guide through what seemed a maze of corridors and winding passages, to the suite of rooms set aside for the use of herself and her pupil. By the time she reached them, troublesome doubts and the sense of dreariness and loneliness were fast fading.

An hour later, almost everything else was forgotten in a keen appreciation of the present comfort of her position. A dainty meal in a pretty school-room, waited on by the motherly half-caste, Maria; then a restful lounge over the fire of the beautifully furnished sitting-room set apart for her own special use, so artistic and luxurious in its fittings and hangings, that she felt more like a princess than a lonely stranger in an unknown family; and when at last she retired to her equally cosy bedroom, she felt that her lines had indeed fallen in pleasant places. So far she had seen none of the family, with the exception of Mr. Hesketh Anson, who, she gathered from Maria, was Mr. Anson's brother. He lived at Moorlands, and acted as his brother's agent. Mrs. Anson was too unwell to see her that day, but she had given Maria instructions to see that Miss Mallet had everything that she needed. Her pupil, too, had been confined to her room for the last day or two with a feverish cold, but would probably be well

enough to come into the school-room on the morrow.

Maria, who had most faithfully carried out her mistress's instructions, came again to her bedroom, the last thing at night, to see that she was comfortable, and insisted, in spite of Leila's economical scruples—a fire in her bedroom having hitherto been an unheard-of luxury—in making up one to last through the night.

"You will need it before the morning," she said, with a shiver. "It is the worst fall of snow I've seen in my life—and the wind! Hark at it!" Then as a thought seemed to strike her, "You are sure, miss," looking curiously at the girl, "you aren't afraid—Lord! a mercy! you don't look much more than a child yourself," a troubled note in her voice.

Leila laughingly disclaimed any such fears; and the woman, casting another curious, half-reluctant glance back at her, left the room.

Tired out, Leila had scarcely laid her head on the pillows before she was asleep. It was between two and three in the morning when she started suddenly out of a deep sleep.

There was a lull in the wind.

The room was dark, except for a dim glimmer at the farther end, where a red glow still burned at the heart of the dying fire. She did not know what had roused her. But she sat up frightened, and wide awake, to listen.

There was a longer pause than usual between the gusts of wind, and for the moment everything was intensely still. She could hear the mice scampering behind the wainscoting; the faint crackling sound of the burned-out embers in the grate; a creak from the basket-chair by the fireside; and with these other noises, familiar to the night, was another, less easy to recognise, but still distinct, in that almost supernatural stillness that reigned between the gusts of a raging wind, or the deafening crashes of a thunderstorm. It came from the door. It sounded most like the passing of a human hand across the woodwork; like the stealthy fumbling of crawling fingers, searching for the bolt.

She remembered suddenly, with a feeling of relief and thankfulness which sent the chilled blood surging with suffocating swiftness through her veins, that she had locked the door before going to bed. Then the wind swooped down once more on the house, and in the first second of its fury she seemed to catch a sound like a far-off

choked cry of rage and agony, lost instantly in the roar of the raging wind.

She sat up in bed, straining her ears to listen, till the gust once more died away. Then she hastily lit her candle, and, stealing out of bed, stirred up the fire, which broke after a moment into a blaze, giving her a vague sense of cheery companionship. Battling with the nervous fancies and fears that beset her, she, with a light, went over to the door, where she stood listening for a few seconds for any sound on the other side. Then, with a violent effort conquering her cowardice, she cautiously opened the door and looked into the adjoining apartment, which was her sitting-room. It was, as she with much unnecessary energy had told herself it would be, empty. Its door, leading in its turn into the passage, was shut. The eerie noises had, after all, only been conjured up by her excited fancy. She flashed the candle, gaining courage, into all its corners, and was just turning back into her room, when something on the floor close to the threshold of the door attracted her attention. She bent swiftly to look. It was a glove—a man's driving-glove. It was heavy, and saturated with moisture, as if the wearer of it had but just come in from the raging snowstorm outside. As she stood, pale and bewildered, staring at it, the light of her candle falling full on it, she saw that it lacked a button.

#### CHAPTER V.

"I DO think that you are just the loveliest governess I've ever had!"

The sincere enthusiasm of the speech, perhaps, atoned for the lack of accuracy in the statement. Leila knew that not by the most liberal canons of art could she claim any pretensions to being a beauty. She laughed, looking, with the most intense appreciation of the child's own loveliness, at her little pupil.

Maria had brought her into the school-room about eleven o'clock that morning. The child was about ten. She still looked delicate from her indisposition, but Leila thought her one of the most beautiful children she had ever seen. There was something uncommon and foreign-looking about her, and Maria, who was plainly devoted to the family, told Leila with great pride that Mrs. Anson was half Spanish, and the most beautiful woman in the county.

Dolores Anson was sitting on the arm of the big chair by the school-room fire, watching Leila put a tuck in her doll's last new frock. Her next statement, perhaps, rather qualified the first.

"You see," with a certain old-fashioned air which touched her at times, "all the others have been so ugly—and old, too. You haven't forgotten the time yet, have you, when you used to play with dolls?" with a sudden anxious wistfulness.

"No," promptly. "I still have my doll. It is put away carefully in a drawer at home. And do you know——"

She checked herself abruptly as she remembered her position as instructor of youth, and questioned the wisdom of betraying the fact that she had even taken a look at it, to see that it was all right, before leaving home.

"Oh, I do wish you had brought it with you! We could have had such lovely times together! Couldn't we send Washington for it? Oh, yes, we will!"

"He will have to go to the Land's End nearly for it," Leila said, with a laugh. "Who is Washington?"

"He's our butler. Do you come from very far?" in an anxious tone.

"Yes, from miles away, and I couldn't tell you how many miles there are between my doll and me!" with an odd note of half-sad, half-amused regret. "But I will help you look after yours. That will be better."

"Yes—if you only stay," with a sudden sorrowful doubt. "But you will be going away like all the rest. I've had hundreds of governesses, I think," with melancholy weariness.

Leila looked up quickly.

"Oh, none of them ever stay here long," answering the look. "They mostly go as soon as they get here. None of the last stayed more than a week," more cheerfully, as if there had been some redeeming feature in the speediness of their departure. "Father and I weren't sorry. They were all so prim and ugly. But mother gets so tired of always changing, and it's all the same; no one ever stays long here, servants or anything. We do everything we can to make the governesses happy," with an air of dignity. "Mother had the sitting and bedroom all done up new for the last one, and she only stayed three days. She was a German. We've tried Germans, and Italians, and Russians, and everything. But I don't think they seem to like us. They all go, some crying, some angry,

and one—I heard her; Uncle Hesketh tried to keep her quiet, but she would scream so, that I heard everything—and she stamped her foot, and said she would send the policemen and put us all in prison, and wanted to see father and mother, but Uncle Hesketh would not let her.”

“Why not?” involuntarily thinking of that young man with a flush of her own cheek. She trusted that any communication she should hold with the family would not have to be carried out through him.

“Oh! He always does everything. Mother gets frightened, and won’t see them, and father is not strong enough. He has some illness that makes him very funny and bad, sometimes,” with tender gravity. “He is too bad sometimes for me to see him, and so Uncle Hesketh does most things like that. How lovely your hair is, Miss Mallet,” nestling her cheek with childish admiration against the pretty head of her new governess, “only you don’t do it nicely.”

That young lady sat for a second, dismayed. The child’s arms suddenly slipped round her neck.

“Don’t go away like the others,” she pleaded. “It is so dull here sometimes. I have no little boys or girls to play with, and there are lots of children about here. I look at them in church, and do so wish they would come and have tea with me; but they never do, and I don’t know any of them. Sometimes I go to have tea with Mrs. Lucas at the Vicarage, but not often, and she hasn’t any children of her own, and she doesn’t ask me when she has a party.”

Lella’s arm slipped with a sudden pitifulness round the child’s waist, but the gravity in her eyes deepened.

“It won’t be so dull now you are here,” and the child nestled closer into the caressing embrace. “You look so different to all the other horrid prim things we’ve had lately. And you’ll stay; oh, you’ll have to! Just look at the snow!” And she sprang off the arm of the chair and ran to the window to look out.

Lella rose, too, and followed her. Before her stretched a scene of the most complete winter desolation. The house, enclosed in extensive grounds, stood on the side of one of those bare, bleak hills of Derbyshire which alternate in such stern contrast with its lovely valleys. The grounds were fairly well wooded, considering the exposed situation, the thick belt of old firs enclosing them helping to shield the less sturdy trees from the full force of the wind as

it swept round the hillside. From the school-room window not another house could be seen. The snow, which had been falling all night, had increased as the wind lulled towards the morning, and was now falling in a thick sheet of whirling snowflakes from the leaden sky overhead. As far as the eye could reach there was one unbroken sweep of snow. Bleak hills, trees, garden paths, and distant country roads, lay white beneath it; while here and there, where the wind had raged in unchecked fury, the snow had been driven into wreaths and drifts, deep enough to make passage not only difficult but dangerous.

“Uncle Hesketh says it will probably snow for the next two days, and if it does, we shan’t get out for a week. You don’t know what it is like here in the winter, Miss Mallet. Do look! Isn’t it lovely when the wind swoops down like that and sends the snowflakes whirling up in the air again? I always think they must be having such fun. And I do so want to go out and join them!” pressing her face, with a strange, eager passion in her eyes, closer to the window-pane. “And they won’t let me. It’s horrid! I don’t wonder that the Grey Boy always comes——”

She stopped, growing red and confused, glancing with a queer, anxious look into Lella’s face.

The child’s manner, perhaps, made the allusion more noticeable.

“Who is the Grey Boy?” she asked.

Dolores brushed away the mist her warm breath had left on the window.

“They said I wasn’t to tell you about him,” she said, with a touch of sulkiness, after a pause. “But I don’t see that it matters. If we don’t tell them they find it out. I believe it is that that frightens them and sends them away. He’s a ghost that haunts this house. I feel a little frightened myself sometimes,” drawing closer to Lella, “though he won’t hurt me. For I met him once down there.” She pointed through the window, down to a thick shrubbery that skirted one side of a small lawn, which with only a bed between reached almost to the walls of the house. “There is a pathway through the shrubbery, leading to the bowling-green. It was getting dark. It was winter-time, and it had been snowing all the afternoon, and I couldn’t stay indoors any longer. Miss Grove, that was my governess then, had gone to lie down with a headache, and I was all alone. So I slipped out just to see the snow better, and when I reached

the path I saw the Grey Boy coming down it, through the snow; and he passed me quite close in the dusk. I could see his face—it was quite white—and his eyes frightened me, I couldn't move. And then he put out his hand and touched mine, and it was as white and cold as snow!" She passed one hand over the other as if she could still feel the icy touch. "And I didn't scream," with a half-fearful pride, "and then he disappeared, and he hadn't hurt me a bit. But mother, and father, and uncle, were so angry that Miss Grove was sent away next day for letting me go out in the snow."

"But that's just what I say!" going on again petulantly. "They needn't be so silly and scared; he didn't hurt me. He is mostly seen when the snow is on the ground. I believe," with mysterious awe, warming up into complete forgetfulness of the injunction laid on her, not to mention the subject to her new governess, "that he was walking last night. It is just the sort of night that he always comes, and mother was bad yesterday, and isn't up yet. She is always ill when he is seen. And father was very bad, too. I heard Uncle Hesketh and Washington helping him to bed ever so late last night, and he was making such queer noises. But when I spoke to Maria about it this morning, she was very cross. She always is when I speak about the Grey Boy, and says it is

all nonsense. But it isn't nonsense. He comes, I know, and that's partly why we have mostly black servants—that and because mother is used to them. They aren't frightened of him like the silly English ones, who are always screaming and thinking he's after them to kill them; and then they give notice and go. But mother, and father, and uncle, too, are very angry if it is talked about."

Lella, feeling, too, that it was an unsuitable subject, changed the conversation.

She and Dolores spent the day together, in the suite of apartments set apart for their use. Besides her own two rooms, there was the school-room, and also a play-room for the child. The passage leading to it was shut off from the rest of the left wing of the house, in which it was situated, by a heavy swing-door. She and Dolores did no lessons that day, and she had several opportunities of discovering the character of the child she had to teach. She did not see any of the other members of the family till nearly dinner-time.

Dolores, still treated as an invalid, had, after considerable opposition on her part, been taken off by Maria, who was her special attendant, to her bedroom, which opened off that of her mother's, in the centre of the house.

It was about half-past seven, when Lella, sitting alone in her own room, saw the door open, and Mrs. Anson enter.

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## HOME NOTES

AND  
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**PAINTING ON LINEN.**—In transparent painting on linen, select a fine and good material, stretch, and lash on a wooden frame. Size the linen with gilders' size diluted in warm water, and use warm. When dry, re-stretch and re-size, and leave it to dry again, once more stretching the material. Try the oil-colours upon it, and if they do not sink in, commence your painting. But if they do, re-size, let it dry, and then rub the surface with pumice-stone till smooth, and re-stretch. The design must be traced with charcoal; and when perfect, go over the outlines with a quill pen dipped in Indian ink. You may also stencil patterns with stencil plates. Mix the oil-colours to be used with japanners' gold-size, working them up well with a palette knife. Then mix the colours in separate saucers, thinning some of them with turpentine to make them lighter in tone, mixing a great variety of colours before beginning to paint. Use pieces of sponge instead of brushes to apply the paint to the fine linen, and take out lights when the colours are nearly dry with a palette knife. You should use hog's-hair brushes for foreground effects, and produce depths of colour by putting on more and more of it; and work at night with gas, or a strong light, behind the linen; and make all the white tints and high lights by leaving those parts unpainted.

**ENQUIRING MIND.**—The object with which the great pyramids of Egypt were built is a much-vexed question. Very many conjectures have been made, but as yet no history or traditions have been handed down to us to clear up the mystery. The late Professor Proctor suggests that they were erected by different kings for the purpose of astronomical observations, and this more especially with a view to predictions having personal reference to their future life, and to discover those epochs that might appear dangerous or propitious to their reigns. In fact, the science of astrology is the keynote, as it were, to the theory he propounded. How the enormous blocks of stone were raised one above another is likewise an unsolved mystery. Experts say that with all our modern appliances and experience to aid us we could not now build the Great Pyramid at a less cost than thirty millions of money.

**A PRUDENT SERVANT.**—A young Austrian count, imprudently fond of the gaming table, by a run of luck at Baden found himself a winner of thirty thousand florins, carried the money away with him, and deposited it carefully in his desk, fully intending to recommence operations next morning with renewed vigour. To his unspeakable dismay, however, the precious roll of notes had in the course of the night unaccountably disappeared, and with it his servant, an old retainer of the family, of whose honesty he had hitherto never entertained the slightest doubt. Ten days later, while still bewailing his loss, the absentee quietly entered the room as if nothing had happened, and handed a folded paper to his master. "Where have you been?" angrily exclaimed the young man. "To Vienna," coolly replied Fritz. "And my thirty thousand florins, where are they?" "Perfectly safe. I felt sure you would lose them again, so I took them to your banker's, and the paper you have in your hand is his receipt for the money."

**YORKSHIRE TEA CAKE.**—Cream half an ounce of German yeast with a teaspoonful of castor sugar; melt an ounce of dripping in a saucepan, and pour a teacupful of milk on it, make it lukewarm, then add it to the yeast and sugar. Place three-quarters of a pound of flour in a basin and strain the liquid on to it, add one well-beaten egg, and mix all thoroughly. Turn the dough on to a floured board, knead it, and cut it into round cakes with the top of a cake tin, grease the tins and put the cakes in them, stand them near the fire for an hour till they have risen, then bake them for a quarter of an hour. These cakes must be allowed to cool, they can then be toasted, buttered, and served hot in a muffineer.

**MAUD.**—You do not say what amount you are prepared to spend on the furnishing of your drawing-room. With woodwork of pitch pine I should have a floral paper, and panel the doors with Japanese paper in cream and gold. Carpet with drab ground and various colours blended in conventional design; curtains, either tapestry or chenille; couch, two easy-chairs, and three or four others covered in tapestry; a draped wicker one; bookshelves in bamboo to go over the cupboard; stand for music, also in Japanese bamboo; small table with flaps; octagon ditto; stand for ornaments to fix in corner of the room, and cabinet, both in the same style of furniture. It is by no means expensive, and looks exceedingly nice and bright.



## ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

**VITAL MECHANISM.**—It has been assumed by those competent to form an opinion that there are twenty-five thousand muscles in a silkworm. There are eight thousand in the trunk of an elephant, and in most of the serpents perhaps more than a million. Through the instrumentality of those organs the flexibility of the boaconstrictor depends. By an act of will—that is, instantly charging the muscles with an extra force—the great python of Africa crushes a living lion into a shapeless mass for swallowing. Every bone is ground into fragments, so that no opposing obstacles, in the form of splinters, or projecting points, can injure the throat on the way to the snake's immensely large elastic stomach. Neither art nor science has yet discovered a method for generating such power by, apparently, such a simple device.

**ARMISTON.**—The sobriquet of the Duke of Wellington was applied to him without any reference to his character and firmness of purpose, although the latter was a leading characteristic of his. It originated in the naming of an iron steamboat after him, which plied between Liverpool and Dublin, and was called "The Duke of Wellington," and distinguished from him as "The Iron Duke." Subsequently the name was applied, in a jocular way, to the Duke himself. The origin of the name "Dragoon" is traced to the fact that the oldest regiment of them (the "Scots Greys," raised 1681) were called after a short musket which they carried, decorated with the head of a dragon on the muzzle, out of the mouth of which the fire spouted, as it was supposed to do out of that of the monster so named.

**CHEF**—To prepare the mutton cutlets in the way you mention, garlic must be used; chop three or four cloves of garlic very fine, with a little parsley, mix with breadcrumbs seasoned with salt and pepper. Cut some rather large slices from a leg of mutton, and shape them like small cutlets, then fix a small piece of macaroni at each end to form the bone (when the cutlets are finished a small frill of paper would go round each stick). Dip each cutlet in melted butter, then cover it with breadcrumbs, etc. When that is done fry them in butter in a sauté pan, then dish them and put them aside. Pour a large breakfast-cupful of broth into the sauté pan with the gravy, and let it warm up, then strain it through a sieve, pouring back the clear gravy into the sauté pan; put the cutlets back into this gravy, add to it a little sugar, salt, and pepper. Let this simmer slowly for a few minutes.

**TO KATE.**—Yes, I have a prescription for almond paste, but I do not often give it, for I find people do not care for the trouble of making it. I advise your doing so, for you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have a pure and safe preparation for the skin. Pound a quarter of a pound of sweet almonds in a mortar, adding gradually the white of an egg to moisten them. When the almonds are reduced to a pulp, add sufficient rose water and rectified spirit in equal proportions to make a paste. Press this into covered pots, and paste paper over so that the air cannot get to it, until required for use.

**SCOTCH COLLOPS** and mince are two very different things, the former being decidedly superior in every way. For it you require about one pound of lean steak free from skin and fat. Mince it carefully. Dredge a little flour over it, and season with pepper and salt. Melt about an ounce of butter or dripping in a saucepan. Then add the mince, stirring it constantly for about ten minutes. Then pour over it about a gill or rather less of boiling stock, stir it well, and, if necessary, dredge in a little more flour. Fry some three-cornered pieces of bread, arrange them round the dish, and pour the collops into the centre. Scatter a little chopped parsley over, and serve.

**DRIED VEGETABLES.**—With the approach of winter our supply of fresh vegetables begins to diminish very perceptibly. This obliges us to use the various dried vegetables which are sold. Among the most useful are peas, beans, and lentils. These are very nourishing, and contain more nitrogenous matter than any other kind of vegetable. All dried vegetables should be soaked in cold water for some hours before boiling, and they also require long cooking to make them soft and digestible. These three, peas, beans, and lentils, take the place of meat to vegetarians; they are nourishing, and make bone and muscle.

**LONDON TOFFEE**—Place in a china-lined saucepan half a pound of treacle, half a pound of Demerara sugar, and four ounces of butter, which should be broken into small pieces. Place the saucepan on a clear fire, and stir slowly, till all the ingredients are well mixed. After this, boil slowly for half an hour, but do not stir often, or the sugar will granulate, and your chance of making toffee will be gone. The juice of half a lemon is a nice flavouring. When nearly done, test the toffee by dropping a little into cold water, and if it crisps pour into a buttered tin.

**EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS IN THE TREATMENT OF OBESITY.**—"Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy stage, with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight 1 to 2 lb. daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an absolute success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, absolutely guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient, in some cases, may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, werepeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring judge. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that, on sending cost of postage (sixpence) a reprint of Press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals—British and foreign—and other interesting particulars, including the 'recipe,' can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C."—"Belfast News Letter."

**A POSITIVE CURE FOR CORPULENCE.**—"Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' and is a cheap issue (only sixpence), published by Mr. F. Russell, of Woburn House, Store St., Bedford Square, London. Our space will not do justice to this book: send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English press. The editor of the 'Tablet,' the Catholic organ, writes: 'Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure; for in the most straightforward and

matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a Marchioness, writes from Madrid: 'My son, Count —, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos.—i.e., 34 lb.' Another writes: 'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes: 'I am just half the size.' A fourth: 'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18 lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes: 'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says: 'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says: 'Step on a weighing-machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I can guarantee that you have lost 2 lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'—"Cork Herald," 27th August, 1892.

**GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PEOPLE.**—It does not follow that a person need to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store St., Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that any one can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treating for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is marvellous how this "Pasteur" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce as much as 14 lb. in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book only costs sixpence, and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really well worth reading."—"Forget-Me-Not," November 19th, 1892.

## ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

**MARKING LINEN.**—The daughter of the late John Bond is justly celebrated for the marking ink which is manufactured in her name. It is most essential to get a good and well-known ink for marking linen, or probably all the trouble taken will be wasted, under the rigid course of washing adopted by laundresses. By sending for a bottle of this ink you will be compensated in two ways: Firstly, by getting the correct thing; and secondly, by a coupon which entitles the purchaser to their monogram or name rubber stamp. These stamps will last a lifetime, and are a marvel of cheapness and durability. The trade mark of this ink is "Crystal Palace," so do not get any other.

**TOWN HOUSE.**—John Noble is sending out a very large assortment of patterns of new season's goods. You could not possibly choose so well at a shop as from these patterns. The serges are really beautiful, and certain to wear well. It appears almost incredible, yet it is perfectly true, that you can buy a lady's serge costume for ten shillings and sixpence, made from the John Noble cheviot serge, trimmed black russia braid, and ready for immediate wear. They are a marvel of cheapness and excellence. Patterns on application free of charge will be sent by return of post by John Noble, 11, Piccadilly, Manchester.

**HOUSEKEEPER.**—Unfermented bread is made with Borwick's baking powder, and is not only perfectly wholesome, but by many persons found to be more digestible than fermented bread. The great secret of success in making unfermented bread lies in the expeditious mixing of the flour with the liquid, and in putting it into the oven the moment this is done. An important point is the thorough incorporation of the baking powder with the flour, as if this is not done little yellow spots appear in the bread, frequently giving rise to needless apprehension of some unwholesome ingredients. Care should be taken to ascertain that the oven is at a proper heat before mixing the bread; the baking sheet should be floured and ready to hand, and not an instant lost in putting the loaves into the oven. Only a small quantity of this bread should be mixed at one time. Two pounds are enough for one operation, and should be divided into three or four loaves. Half an hour will bake them. Two teaspoonfuls of Borwick's baking powder and half a pint of water are the proportions for a pound of flour of the finest quality; a little less liquid is required for second qualities.

**LAMENESS.**—It is now possible for those persons who are afflicted with a shortened limb to do away with the conventional cork boot or the unsightly iron attachment, and possess an extension which will enable them to stand erect, wear ordinary shoes or slippers, and present the appearance of having two perfect feet. The inventor is Mr. O'Connor, whose right leg is six inches shorter than the left, and who has succeeded in producing an extension which removes all appearance of deformity, and enables the wearer to walk long distances comfortably and naturally. The arrangement is such that the foot of the short leg fits comfortably into the appliance, and a stocking and ordinary shoe can be drawn over it. The invention is one which will assuredly be considered a boon by those who need it. The sole makers are Messrs. Lilley and Skinner, 275 and 276, High Holborn.

**MABEL.**—I am sorry to hear such bad news about your baby; but he is evidently mending now. So you must cheer up, and look on the bright side. You should get a very useful little book which is issued by Mr. Alfred Fennings, West Cowes, Isle of Wight, called "Every Mother's Book." It contains plenty of hints which you will do well to study. I like Baechem's Tooth Paste best; it is put up in tubes and lasts a very long time. You can get it at any chemist's. Do you use flannel night-gowns for your baby? If not, commence them at once; they are so necessary for restless children, who always throw off the bed-clothes.

**ART AT HOME.**—It is, as you say, no easy matter to select a good style of lace curtains at an ordinary shop, and we can hardly guide your taste in the matter without further particulars than you have given. We strongly advise you to send to Samuel Peach and Sons, Lister Gate, Nottingham, for their illustrated price list. The designs of this firm are very elegant, and the quality of the lace curtains, etc., better for the price than can be obtained at any London house.

**ANNUS MIRABILIS.**—Claret would make your hair darker. What you want is something to make it lighter. Try washing it with Scrubb's Ammonia in hot water once a week, and you may then brush a very little peroxide of hydrogen down the length of the hair. Possibly, after the first week, if you do this once a month or once in six weeks it would be sufficient. Salts of tartar in the water tends to make the hair lighter, but dries it very much.

been as matters of course, now hurt him. The coarseness of many of those who surrounded him, and with whom he was necessarily brought into close contact, grated upon him cruelly. The unsavoury word, broad jest, or noisy oath seemed an offence against her perfect purity and exquisite refinement.

It was a wretched life enough the man led, conscious of his own madness and folly, yet helpless to break his fetters; nay, fully realising that those fetters were closing upon him day by day. He counted the days, he counted the hours, until the one that should bring him into her presence. That hour seemed the culmination of his life. Yet it was agony to see the men of her own rank paying her open deference—noble service of gentle courtesy—while he had to stand by dumb.

One precious privilege he had that no one could take from him.

He could listen.

When the birds sing in the sunshine, the humblest of God's creatures may hearken at will, and take the joy and the ripple of the music into their own hearts to gladden them; and when Alison spoke or sang, no one could hinder him from drinking in the sweetness of tone or tune. He knew that every time his eyes rested on her sweet face, the madness within him grew; that every time she spoke a casual word to him, her power over him increased a hundred-fold. He knew that if by chance his hand touched hers, as he moved the music at her bidding, his pulses were stirred to a tumult of joy. He knew these privileges of his, which he shared with every creature about her, to be poor things indeed, but yet—as he would say to himself with a passionate insistence—his own. His kindness to Drummer Coghlan fairly puzzled that astute man, who straightway gave a glowing description of the Sergeant to 'Liza and little Missy was not behindhand in chattering to Alison and Elsie of his manifold perfections, ending up by solemnly announcing that she hadn't made up her mind if she shouldn't throw over "Mis—ter Verrinder" and take the "bee—oo—fitel" Sergeant for a sweetheart. When it was explained to her that ladies didn't take Sergeants for sweethearts, she evidently looked upon the distinction as a narrow and invidious one, declaring her intention of being "trumphtiant" and pleasing her own self when she was "big as 'Liza."

The fact was, that the Sergeant, made

cunning by that astute schoolmaster, Love, managed to hear something of Miss Drew's movements through the open-hearted drummer, and even stooped so pitifully low as to affect an unbounded interest in Shadrach, Meshach, and little Abednego, and to have those worthies brought to his bunk for exhibition. So it came about that he heard about little Patsey, and his eyes grew quite misty as he thought of his Lady going on her mission of love and comfort to the suffering child. Her kindness to Norah, her interest in Harry Deacon, these things he knew, and held sacred. Had he not proved it? Had he not been "falsely true"—of "faith unfaithful"—because of them? He had thought seriously, several times since that night, of Harry Deacon; indeed, he and the drummer had held a sort of council together on the matter. To have stayed out without pass after post, because of Norah ("I'm that way myself with 'Liza, when she gets off for an hour, an' we're after taking a turn by the river in the twilight," Coghlan had put in at this stage of the said council) that was a mere nothing; to get a trifle too much on the spree, bad, truly, but still what many a good soldier falls into now and again. A pity, since no good-conduct badge can be won that way, and the record sheet cannot be as clean as might be wished, but after all, not an unpardonable sin, looked at from a soldier's point of view.

But the possibility—

Coghlan winced as if some one had stuck a pin into him, even in only suggesting it, and the Colour-Sergeant looked grave.

"I don't think the Colonel could stomach such a notion, anyway," said Coghlan. "He'd be after losing his sinces at the mere mention of it; for though they do call him the soldier's friend, he can be stiff enough when needs be—as the lot of us knows well—an' I'm after thinkin', Sergeant, as the Adjutant suspects Harry, an' sets a little he-divel by the name o' Tim, a flittin' shadder of an unbaptised spalpeen as lives up the valley way, to spy on him besoides. Not a worred o' this to any livin' soul, Sergeant, beyond you an' me. I'm terrified to say the ghost of a worred, even to 'Liza, for if mischief came to Harry Deacon, Norah would break her blessed heart, an' Miss Alison—the saints make her bed in her sickness when her own time comes!—she's that pitiful and tender-hearted, she'd cry her sweet eyes out to keep her company."

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

MAY 27 1894

## All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

# CHARLES DICKENS.

PART 60.

### CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Through the Ranks. A Serial		The Grey Boy. A Short Serial	
Story ... 553, 577, 601, 625		Story ... 572, 594, 620, 642	
Professional Football ... 558		Labour Bureaux ... 605	
A Phantom Fortune. A Com-		A Sketch in Minnesota ... 610	
plete Story ... 562		Nocturne ... 614	
The Old Year. A Poem ... 567		A Frosty Flirtation. A Complete	
The Two Bostons ... 567		Story ... 614	
Short Change ... 582		The Life of a Brown Rabbit ... 630	
"Occupation — Author." A		A Remarkable Conspiracy ... 632	
Complete Story ... 586		Amateur Workhouse Visiting ... 635	
Our Coal Industries ... 590			

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NEAVE'S FOOD FOR INFANTS

it is all gone he goes back to the work-house again. It is quite possible, indeed, that the master thief himself and many of his apprentices may be among the crowd, not on predatory business bent, but a little anxious as to the security of their own particular dividends.

For the British funds are the only kind of security in the civilised world to which a man's or woman's face is the only title-deed. A man may possess Consols—the name will survive in literature although on the Stock Exchange it may become obsolete—to any amount without the existence of a scrap of paper or a line of writing to betray the fact. And all this throng of people, who flock in all day long, are regarded by the Bank as so many accounts, with balances due to be paid on demand.

But now you find yourself in a handsome room or hall that reminds one of the old Irish Commons House, now the Bank of Ireland, for it is a lofty rotunda with a circular counter in the middle, with ever so many glazed pens for the paying clerks, all of whom are busy enough weighing gold or counting over notes, or clashing bags of silver on the polished surface. It is a silent scene, too, and the stillness is only broken by the jingle of coin and the ring of copper shovels and scales. It was quite otherwise once upon a time in this rotunda, which was formerly a place of meeting for brokers and others, a kind of succursal to the Stock Exchange, where much of the business in Government securities was conducted. When the stockbrokers were at last shut out in order to extend the business part of the Bank, they resented the exclusion which was carried out with some brusqueness; and it is said that the relations between the "old lady" of Threadneedle Street and the Stock Exchange have never since been marked by the cordiality that formerly prevailed. Anyhow, when the then governor of the Bank became subsequently bankrupt, it is said that the announcement was greeted with three cheers on the Stock Exchange.

A governor of the Bank is no more exempt from liability to future misfortune than any other human creature. But for a governor to fail during his term of office, as did Mr. R. M. Raikes in 1834, was an affair which agitated the public mind a good deal. It was just half a century ago, and the autumn dividends were coming due, and never was seen such a

rush to be paid. People fought and scrambled for their places at the desks, and at the least accidental delay in payment the report went round that the Bank was going to "bust." At that time, however, there was a good deal more function and trouble in paying dividends than now, the whole process of accounts having been much simplified in 1842 by a young official, Mr. William Ray Smee.

There is no statue or bust of Mr. Smee, as far as we know, in any part of the Bank of England, and yet here in the rotunda, in the midst of all this order and smoothness of detail, his statue should represent the presiding genius of the place.

In the great room beyond the rotunda is a sight that must awake everybody's interest. There on the shelves above the heads of the officials are the parchment-bound volumes, which form the Golden Book of the British nation. To have your name well inscribed between these covers is to have all the good things of life at your disposal: wealth without care, honour without effort, while at any moment your possessions may be turned into current coin by a mere stroke of the pen. But in the departmental eye you are of equal importance, whether you hold stock to the amount of a pound or a million. There are accounts, indeed, as small as a penny, while the highest individual score amounted some time ago to five and three-quarter millions. As to the number of accounts, which means the number of dividend drawers, they were estimated in 1842 at half a million, but the number has probably decreased very much since then, and at the date of the conversion effected by Mr. Goschen a few years ago, the three principal stocks showed only about a hundred and seventy thousand accounts.

In these parchment-covered volumes the Smiths, as might be expected, hold the place of honour. In the year of the conversion there were nearly five thousand five hundred Smiths in the books, over five hundred of whom bore the name of John. The Browns were nearly half as numerous, and the Joneses ran them close—of a frugal race is Shenkin—and these three only are placed, other surnames being hopelessly distanced. As to how the army of dividend drawers are identified, that is the secret of the Bank, but it is very rarely that personation is attempted, and still more rarely with success. The few successful frauds that have come to light have, for the most part, been suggested by

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR." 27 1893

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

NO. 258.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER XV. AT LOVE'S CLEAR CALL.

PEOPLE went about saying it was a grand autumn, for the bright, sunny days continued, and the yellow leaves, flickering as they fell, looked like flights of golden butterflies, things too pretty and airy to be associated in men's thoughts with death and decay. Even the birds that had been silent all through the summer heat, began to ask one another, in little low, questioning notes, if there might not be some mistake, and a new sort of springtime were not visiting the earth, making all things new. But there are times and seasons in the lives of men when the radiance of the sun and the beauty of the world seem as jarring notes, and an added burden to that which presses already too heavily upon shrinking shoulders.

Nothing could be more beautiful than the woods that surrounded the Wish-ing Well; the little house which turned its side-face to the road was resplendent, for the stoncrop on its thatch was bright with flowers, and a Virginia creeper, now one crimson glory, clung to the brown wall and festooned the low gable like a banner.

The pigeons in their aerial homes coo-rooed mightily; were restless, too, for no one came out to them with deftly held apron, or called to them in a voice as soft and mellow as their own. There was no one to be seen in all the sunshine-flooded garden, except that ridiculous Phelim, and

he was evidently suffering from mental depression, for he lay all along under the shadow of the hedge, his nose upon his paws, and his ears hanging flaccid like the empty sails of a wherry, of which his tall might have been the bowsprit.

The pretty birds flew hither and thither, as if seeking something they had lost. Now and again one, bolder than its fellows, would light upon the moss-grown window-sill, pecking at the tiny diamond panes with its soft bill, yet all unheeded. Within was a woman whose heart was riven, whose eyes were dim with sorrow.

No one could stand between Norah and that fearful load of grief. When the people saw her kneeling in the little chapel where the red light ever burned before the altar; when they saw her head bowed upon the clasped hands from which hung the beads and cross; when they saw her shake as the young sapling shakes when the wind of heaven blows upon it, and saw the big tears falling on the floor, then they crossed themselves with frenzied vehemence, and moaned and prayed aloud after the manner of their kind; but from Norah's white lips came no sound. They would stand aside in the road, these simple people, to let her pass, muttering: "Ah now, the craythur! See now the looks av her!" then call upon their many saints; but they all recognised, with the keen intuitiveness of their race, that she stood apart—that no comfort could avail her. She was sacred in their eyes, for her gentle ways had won them long ago; and she was their pride and joy once, though now the fair head was brought so low; and they loved the English lady who came to see her, discoursing among themselves of the wonder and mystery that a heretic should be so tender and so good.



It seemed, indeed, as if Alison's sympathy was the one thing Norah clung to.

Look at her—the poor child! with her eyes heavy with nights of weeping, and full of a terrible fear—wide, strained, like those of a child who has seen some terrible thing, and in fancy sees it again and again. See with what a convulsive twitching her hand clings to Alison's; see how the strained eyes search her face as if for some sign of hope or consolation! Heaven knows poor Alison stands as sorely in need of comfort herself; yet, in the midst of her own pain, she is able to give out comfort and sustaining power to that sad one beside her. The discipline of sorrow has already taught her that highest of all lessons. She is able to put herself aside altogether for the moment. Ah, blessed gift! It is a strange situation, in which these two women are placed. The man that each loves lies, as it were, at the point of death; death stares him in the face. Harry Deacon lies under arrest for the murder of Colour-Sergeant Smith; further, he is also accused of the blackest crime known to military law—the assassination of his superior officer. The Colour-Sergeant lies in the dreary hospital ward, drawing each painful breath as though it were a knife-blade thrust into his breast; death stands at his pillow with upraised hand ready to strike. And these two women are agonising, hour by hour, and day by day; the one openly in the sight of all the world, the other in the secret torture-chamber of her own heart; and heaven is besieged with prayers. Their thoughts, indeed, are prayers which, as winged messengers, fly heavenwards and cry for mercy.

The interior aspect of the once cheerful little living-room has undergone a sad change since we saw it last. Of that spick-and-span neatness, that shining order, so rare in an Irish cabin, not much is left.

The cushion, with its bobbins all entangled, is shoved away on an old settle; one bobbin, indeed, has fallen from a snapped thread and rolled into a corner of the bricked floor; a trifle, perhaps, but like the straw whirled by the current, showing the drift of things. A bunch of gilly-flowers, brown, withered, and long since dead, stands on the little mantel. Every detail tells the story of a desolation deep and complete; and Norah's figure as she sits by the table, her hands supporting her chin, the dark tangled locks falling about her pale cheek and brow, suits well with her surroundings. Alison stands

near, looking down upon her with her pitiful eyes; eyes that look as though no sleep had visited them, but only tears.

How long is it, measured by time, since she heard the tearing whistle of that fatal shot? Measured by feeling, it is a lifetime. She stood there in the quiet, sunlit room, busying herself with the tea—one woman; since then, she has been some one else. She feels in a dazed sort of way, that she shall never reach back to that past estate. Will the story of her life—her vivid, passionate life of the last few months, die out in darkness, all unknown? Shall she never again see the face that looked at her from under the shadowy trees, the face full of bitter regret and wild, unspoken longing? Shall she never again hear the voice that spoke the words that have thrilled her with their memory ever since?

"I am a man, you are a woman, and—I have dared to love you." Then comes the rhythm of a song:

Over the pathless ocean,  
Under the burning sun,  
No matter where I wander,  
Thoughts of you, sweet, will come.  
Bid me good-bye, good-bye, love,  
Bid me good-bye, good-bye.  
Say, will you miss me, darling? . . .

Ah, Heaven! will the fond and foolish words never cease ringing in her maddened ears; will no chance be given her to murmur one word of farewell to the dying man, to give one loving touch to the dear hand before it grows cold and lifeless?

Should she hear the wail of the death-march, the measured tramp of feet, the sharp ping of the shots fired across an open grave; should she have to stand calmly by and hear the people say, "Oh, the pity of it, so excellent a soldier, cut off thus in the very prime of his strength and manhood!" and murmur some inarticulate reply, while the heart within her should be as lead, and the sight of her eyes fail for the burning, pressed-back tears? Worse still, should she see it all forgotten in some new wonder; should she steal on the sly to the graveyard, find out the headstone erected by his comrades to his memory, lay a wee white flower at the foot of the snow-white cross, and cry, "I loved you—I loved you—but—we were parted so far"? Can the dead hear? Maybe; but they cannot answer, and the silence that stifles us is unbroken.

It is this awful coming silence that Alison dreads. She could have scourged herself for letting her thoughts drift self-

wards, with that poor sorrowing girl before her; but it had been like that with Alison in these bitter days, wherever she went, or whatever she was doing, the under-current was always there. It seemed mixed up with the memory of the flowing river, the brown, foam-flecked water running on and on, the shifting shadows of the night, the shriek of the fiddle on the hill.

There has been a silence; not an empty silence, but one full of throbbing thoughts. The pigeons have been having it all their own way—coo-roo, coo-roo—and Alison has suddenly called to mind the picture of Norah, happy and smiling, with the pretty birds crowding round her, climbing on to her shoulder with their little pink feet, and thrusting their soft beaks into the meshes of her hair. Well might one say, watching her now, "Look on this picture and on that." What a lifetime seems to lie between the two! It is Norah who breaks this silence, and her voice has the ring of an abiding sorrow.

"Shure, Miss Alison, the heart av me wint out to him, an' niver come back at all, an' now whin he's in the cold valley o' sorro' it clings to him the closer. I pray the blissid saints all night an' day to lev it be a bit o' warmth to him, this dear love that bates as thrus to him now as in them first swate days. Ah, Miss Alison dear, will they be afther chokin' the young life out av him for the sin that he's sinned? Will they take him from our sight for iver, he that's so dear to me—dear to me past the spakin' av? And what for would he shoot the beautiful Sergeant that niver did him a bit of harm at all, at all? Shure an' it was just lettin' off his gun he was, to pass the time away, an' the Sergeant he got in the way widout manin' it, an' Harry shot him widout manin' it; an' I'll be up an' afther tillin' the court an' the judge an' jury, an' all the grand gentlemen assimbled, as that was the way av it, an' niver a lie tould."

But here—poor, fond, distracted soul!—she casts herself down on her knees, and that bitter cry goes up that is to haunt Alison Drew for many and many a day to come. "Oh, my Harry, my Harry! He wasn't as good as many, but dearer to me than the best. Oh, why couldn't I keep him? It wasn't much to ask. My Harry, my Harry!"

It seemed to ring out into the sun-bright air as Alison hastened home; it

seemed to pursue her like some tortured, impalpable thing.

And she, she hadn't the right to cry out for what fate had wrested from her; hers must be a silent sorrow, a stifled pain. As the road dipped and she passed into the valley, the bells of Shandon broke out into a peal. It was a saint's day, or some festival, and they were making merry over it, tumbling over each other into the vale beneath, soft and sweet, joyous and gay.

On Patrick's Hill Alison met the Sergeant-Major, dignified, massive, ineffable, and, a little to his surprise it must be confessed, stopped him and asked, in quite a commonplace tone—such power have a certain type of women over themselves in extreme moments—how the Colour-Sergeant was reported to be that afternoon.

The Sergeant-Major stood stiffly to attention—a lamp-post could not be stiffer—and informed the lady, in the longest words he could call up upon so short a notice, that the injured man was as bad as bad could be to keep any hold on life at all. This was all that Alison gained by her indiscretion, and she caught her breath sharply two or three times as she made her way onwards.

At this time the Hundred and Ninety-Third was in a very disturbed state. A military murder at all times gives the regiment in which it happens an undeniable notoriety; and in the present state of affairs in the south of Ireland, such an incident was peculiarly undesirable. A certain paper did, indeed, show the sensational heading of "Disaffection and Suspected Disloyalty in one of our Line Regiments," and all alike dreaded that heading coming to the Colonel's knowledge. Blizzard, reading it in the ante-room with starting eyes, had the presence of mind to sit upon the paper promptly; but this was only dallying with the inevitable. Of course the Chief saw it; kept silence—glaring—at mess; and the next morning, the orderly-room was compared by many irate ones to a certain undesirable locality, which popular superstition affirms to be unpleasantly warm as to climate. Chubby especially came to grief; for the Chief—who hated his young officers marrying—had heard of his engagement to Miss Henniker; indeed, never was so injured a creature as Mr. Charles Verrinder when, the same afternoon, he sought for consolation in the society of his beloved. It must be allowed that he and Elsie were the most aggressively cheerful

lovers. The sturdy Midland Rector knew all about it by this time, and had said "Bless my soul!" many times over. Verrinder's sisters had written to beg for photographs of Elsie; the sexton had heard the news, scratched his head, and said to every one who came to look into the grave he was digging: "Malster Charles have got a sweetheart—sure-ly. T' Rector he tould me so his own blessed self, an 'tis a true tale—so it be." The young couple had every prospect of long waiting, and seemed to thrive upon it. They appeared to possess an unlimited stock of sunshine of their own, and to ask for nothing better than the present state of things. Alison felt almost a traitor to carry such an aching heart in her breast when two such happy creatures were about. Verrinder had just been telling Mrs. Henniker and Elsie how that the only man in the regiment who was not wildly indignant at Deacon's rash act being looked upon as "disaffection," was Ellerton, when Alison came in.

"How pale and tired you look! Oh, Alison!" cried Elsie, darting from her lover's side, and pushing a low lounge-chair near to the small pine-knot fire which glimmered cheerfully in the grate. "She shall not go upstairs to take off her things, shall she, mother, till she has had some tea!"

They had all been very tender over Alison ever since that day when Elsie found Hugh Dennison kneeling by the senseless girl in fear and anguish unspeakable. The others were not so much afraid as he; they had seen her like that before—so they told him—after her mother died. She had never been really strong since then, and she had been taking it out of herself sadly, being so much with poor little Patsy. Mrs. Musters had told them she was quite in a prostrate condition when she got to Monte Notte the night the child died. But Hugh Dennison now knew all the truth, and even the faintest hope lived in his heart no longer. All he thought of was Alison herself, and of what her suspense and misery must be. He honoured her too deeply to question aught she did; and the secret that in another woman he might have thought something savouring of dishonour, in her was certain to be pure and good. He was sure of this, and always should be, even if he never knew anything more than that one glance at her terror-stricken face had taught him. He was puzzled; but his faith in the woman he

loved and honoured above all others was unshaken.

"Isn't Mr. Ellerton a pig?" said Elsie, resuming the conversation into which Alison's entrance had broken, and by this remark it will be gathered that the Major was not present.

"He said," continued Verrinder, "upon his soul he shouldn't be surprised if Deacon was mixed up with a nasty lot, meaning—"

"Fenians," said Elsie promptly.

"Hu—sh!" cried Chubby at this. "Believe me, my dear girl, the very walls have ears."

"Nasty things," said Elsie.

"I don't know about Tim," said Alison, speaking with evident effort, "but if Mr. Ellerton means Norah, he is much mistaken. Her one thankfulness has been all along that Deacon had nothing to say to anything of that sort. She told me he thought himself ill-treated; her very words were that he 'had a grudge—and—and—'"

"Shot the wrong man," put in Elsie. "I heard her say that. By the way, I wonder who the right man was?"

"She did not tell me that," said Alison, and then no one said any more, for the door opened, Major Henneker came in, followed by Dr. Musters, and there was that in their faces that held everybody silent.

The Major crossed to Alison's side. She had risen to her feet, and stood facing him with a terrible eagerness in her eyes.

"My girl," said the Major, and his voice thrilled and shook; "my girl, we have all loved and trusted you, we will try—to trust—you—still——"

The man's pride was bleeding; all his ideas of what was right and seemly were outraged, and yet with the generosity of a noble nature he wished to be both just and tender. He laid his hand somewhat heavily on Alison's shoulder as he spoke, and she felt it tremble; but she looked bravely into his face, and then past him to Dr. Musters, holding out her hands.

"Have you come for me?" she said, and her voice sounded to them all as the voice of a stranger.

"Yes," said the doctor, who was pale and grave, and whose lips twitched as he spoke.

Alison turned to Major Henneker, and laid her arm about his neck.

"I must go, uncle dear," she said; "but say that I may—will you? It will help me in what is—coming."

"Go," he said, turning from her with a groan, and Elsie, clinging to her mother, broke out sobbing.

Nobody quite knew how Mrs. Masters got into the room, but that remarkable woman was there in their midst, her round, substantial features wearing an expression of much fright and bewilderment, but still not without a certain air of resolve.

"I don't know what it's all about," she said, twisting her little fat hands the one in the other; "but Geoffrey says it's got to be—and so I suppose it's all right. Any way, I thought I was the best person to go with her, so I came across."

It was a strange little procession enough which, a few moments later, set out to the hospital; the two men, and—reversing the usual order of things, the two women—following. Of course, the Scotch Sergeant received them as if such visits were things of everyday occurrence and quite a matter of course—a stolidity which had in it something helpful to them all. How silent the hospital! How their feet echoed on the steep stone stairs! Here and there a blue-coated figure moved stealthily; and as the Sergeant entered a small isolated ward, an orderly left the side of a low cot-bed and passed them.

With a light like a flame on her face, Alison went straight up to the dying man, and, wholly undismayed by the horrible change which had taken place in him since last she saw him, fell softly on her knees by the bed.

"I am come," she said, and then, gazing each at the other as though they could never gaze their fill, both kept silence.

Mrs. Masters, seated by a window at the end of the ward, was crying quietly into her pocket-handkerchief, and the Major stood with folded arms and outwardly impassive face at the foot of the cot.

"When every breath you draw cuts you like a knife, and the sweat beads upon your brow every moment, you cannot be very eloquent over what you have to say."

"I asked them to tell me—when the end was coming—and then—I sent for you—"

"I am here."

"Will you tell me—that I am—for-

given? It will make it easier for me—if you will."

As Ruth may have looked when she took her stand by Naomi, so looked Alison Drew, kneeling by that humble bed, and in that bare and whitewashed room. The light of an exquisite resolve and self-surrender was in her eyes; she was as one who has passed beyond the things of this world, and gained some divine standpoint, where nothing stands but absolute truth.

She threw her head back, raising her clasped hands.

"If you are going to leave me, take this knowledge with you: I love you—love you—love you. Whatever distance lies between us, to me you are a most sweet and noble gentleman, and I am proud to think you love me, as I know you do."

She bent over him, and kissed him lingeringly and softly on his poor white face, once, twice, thrice.

Then, with a look of fear, she sprang to her feet. A change had passed upon him. His eyes had lost their look of consciousness; he moved his head restlessly from side to side upon the pillow, moaning and muttering. It showed how well Major Henneker understood the nature he had to deal with, that he did not attempt to take Alison away from a sight which to many women would have been unbearable.

"Can you tell what he is saying?" said the Sergeant—always impassible—but coming forward promptly and bending over the unconscious face.

"He is talking about the choir singing," said Alison. "He thinks it is choir practice—listen!"

"Come, boys," said the lips, which the deep moustache could not hide, so white and bloodless were they; "come on—you will be late. . . ."

Then a pause, while the restless hands began to pluck the coverlet, and a look of longing, of restless, craving desire, came across the poor, sunken face.

"I am listening," he muttered, "but I cannot hear her voice—I cannot hear her voice. . . ." and the murmured words died into a fretful moaning.

What happened then, no one that heard and saw could ever forget.

The red sunset light came in through the high, uncurtained window, and to that light Alison raised her eyes. They were as the eyes of a mystic in a moment of exaltation; her hands were knotted, the one in the other, in a passionate grip; and

in another moment the clear, beautiful voice rose high, filling the ward :

The King of Love my Shepherd is,  
His goodness faileth never ;  
I nothing lack if I am His,  
And He is mine—for ever.

A smile lay upon the sick man's mouth, his eyes closed softly, the restless head was still, the hands outstretched and still.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me,  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy Cross before to guide me.

One or two men who were loitering in the barrack square came beneath the window to listen, pulling off their caps and standing there bareheaded in the dying sunlight.

### PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL.

THE other day a certain Circuit of the United Methodist Free Church assembled, and passed the following resolution: "That this meeting deeply deplores the many terrible deaths resulting from the game of football, and urges upon Her Majesty's Government the great importance of so amending the law as to make it a capital offence for one man to kick his fellow to death on the football field."

Such a resolution would not, we fancy, get very far on its way to the Home Secretary, at whom, presumably, it was aimed. It seems rather foolish. Possibly some gentleman, connected with this particular Circuit, was related to a football player who chanced to die from an injury accidentally received during the game. If so, his personal feelings in the matter do credit to his heart ; though the resolution which was their outcome can scarcely be said to do credit, either to his own head or to the united intellect of the above-mentioned Circuit.

It is at least likely that the gentlemen of this Circuit never witnessed a football match. The fact would not put them out of count as critics of the game. Quite otherwise. None know better than professional writers that the imagination can often caper most effectively about a subject, into the very elements of which its owner has not taken the trouble to look. Take as the classic example that brave report of Blackheath football, sent by a Frenchman in London to a Parisian journal :

"This is what I saw. The players pre-

cipitated themselves furiously upon each other ; arms and legs were instantly dislocated ; collar-bones broken ; children of tender years limped off the field with fatal injuries ; and all round were weeping mothers and distracted fathers, tending their bruised and battered offspring. . . . Anon the game was resumed, amidst howls and execrations from all sides. Fragments of clothing, and of hair and skin, torn ruthlessly from the heads and bodies of the rivals, strewed the field. It was a spectacle terrible and affecting. I turned away with tears in my eyes."

Can anything be more moving than this description ? Truly nothing. It is Homeric in its vigour, and worthy of Munchausen for its veracity. The worthy gentlemen of the United Methodist Free Church must really, we think, have read this notable report and had their reason temporarily unsettled by it. If so, let them take comfort for the Home Secretary's brutal indifference to their resolution—if it ever reached him—in our earnest assurance that the Frenchman's narrative was a dainty Gallic falsehood, designed to divert the wise, deceive the ignorant, and foster a distaste for English institutions across the Channel.

But, on the other hand, we would not go to the opposite extreme and aver with some that the perils of football, as now played, are not greater than those daily incurred by travellers betwixt Charing Cross and Cheapside. That is a convenient but preposterous euphemism. The ordinary pedestrian Citywards does not put himself in the way of bodily peril. An omnibus may fall on its side and crush him ; a dog may suddenly become rabid, and choose him for its first or second victim ; or a shop sign may become detached from its support and immolate his hat and brains in one fell swoop. Such possibilities, however, are distinctly of the extraordinary kind.

The professional football player is in a different case. Though rules be ever so emphatic, and referees ever so firm and Argus-eyed, who is to assure him that by the merest chance he shall not get his spine injured, a broken nose or a broken leg ? There are abundant instances of such accidents. Only a few weeks ago a poor young Yorkshireman died of a broken neck incurred in a Cup competition. This would not claim such individual notice but for the fact that he had lingered in the hospital nearly a year after the event. The trainer and medicine man

are essential parts of every first-class football team nowadays. Both hold themselves in readiness to run at a moment's warning to the field of play, with liniments and bandages. There is, in short, an undoubted risk about football. One cannot marvel that a tender-natured mother feels something of the bitterness of bereavement when she says good-bye to her athletic first-born, upon his departure for a season's football with a team which has a reputation for rough play, which provokes retaliation. Even the Muse is not silent on the subject:

When autumn leaves are falling,  
And nature doth the soul enthral,  
We may not meet again on earth, love,  
I'm going to play football.  
Farewell, and perhaps for ever;  
I'm going to play football.

These lines, from a song entitled "The Half-Back's Farewell," may be read—or sung—seriously or with a latent smile of amused scepticism. In either case they serve equally well as warrant for the belief that no man knows how he may leave the football field on any particular afternoon. The famous Sir Henry Sidney, who, in 1566, wrote to his son, then at Shrewsbury School, these words of prudent advice: "Use exercise of body, but such as is without peril of your joints or bones," would in no manner have allowed the lad to become a professional football player.

It is not, perhaps, generally known that there are Football Insurance Unions. Nor is it a matter of common knowledge that in the North and Midlands, where football excitement is keenest, the Press finds it profitable to issue coupons with certain of its weekly sheets, which entitle the owners thereof to five pounds if, having signed the same, they should be so fortunate, or unfortunate, as to break arms or legs at football.

All this is evidence that there is a suspicion of danger in modern football. We do not need the swollen lists of accidents in a season, compiled by opponents of the game, to make us aware of it. But, considering the number of clubs in the land, the proportion of such accidents to players is really very small indeed, and of fatal or serious accidents too small to be worth mentioning.

The people will have sport in one way or another. That may be taken as an axiom. Hence the enormous growth of football as a spectacle, and its development until it has come to be called a

science. This would, perhaps, be very sad if it could be proved that the players themselves suffered in this new aspect of the game; if it were obvious that they were unwilling tools of a capricious and ungenerous master; and if they degenerated as human beings in the exercise of this new profession.

But how stands the case really?

From the writer's experience of them, paid professional football players are not at all necessarily debased by their brief career. It is very absurd to imagine that a man may go on to the football field and deliberately maim an antagonist with impunity. Never were referees more dead against fouls of all kinds. The player with a reputation for brutality is likely soon to be without an engagement. He must coerce his unregenerate instincts in this direction if he means to gain honour, acclamation, and the pelf that is the outward and visible testimony of his honourable skill as a player. We have known a regular termagant of a fellow, reckless and rough to a degree as an unpaid player, sober down as a professional into an admirable exponent of the game.

To be sure, the men are subjected to enough temptations. Few of us could, without a little dizziness, stand such adulation as they receive. Some of them fall, of course. It is hard to resist the Epicurean lures that assail them in the prime of their young manhood: the smiles of womankind, the brimming pewter, proffered with kindly intent but lamentable result, and the other temptations which hold out the hand to them and plead to be caressed. What think you of such an advertisement as the following?

#### FOOTBALLERS.

Wanted, at once, a good man.  
If he gets a try,  
Can have a tobacco shop;  
If he gets a goal,  
Can have a public-house.

There need not be much amiss with the career of tobaccoist in conjunction with that of football player; but the public-house is another matter. Yet some hundreds of first-class professionals are publicans as well, and do not appear corrupted. One can understand the attraction such a life has for them. It must be enchanting, after a bright though fatiguing afternoon's play, to retire to one's own smoke-room, and there, an uncrowned king, receive homage and

flattery from one boon companion and customer after another. It is, moreover, a "métier" that makes provision for summer as well as winter, and in which one's wife may be an effective helper. And that it suits the athlete is clear from the liking your retired puglist and sprinter have for it. Still, the glamour of the pint pot is about it; and the siren Beer is often a most unmitigated hussy.

But those who come to grief over these obstacles owe it surely to themselves, and not to the "profession" which gave them the opportunity of rising superior to temptation. This is, perhaps, rather a lofty way of looking at it, yet it seems to be sensible.

The average football professional may have been a bricklayer, an iron-worker, or a potter ere he took service with a team and entered public life. If he is prudent he does not lose grip of his old employment when he signs his professional indenture, and receives his fifty shillings or three pounds a week for eight months in the year. At least, not all at first. Opportunities of bettering himself are bound to occur, especially if, as he well may, he saves a part of his professional earnings. And it is really monstrous to suppose, as some seem to, that the professional is, as it were, compelled to squander his football pay in nips and convivial treats and in cards in the saloon car which week after week takes him to hostile fields. We know teetotal professionals and non-card-playing professionals, and professionals who have aged mothers and dependent brothers and sisters who have good reason to be proud of their famous relatives. If the people insist on spectacular football and are eager to pay for it, why should they not have it—for their own sakes, the profit of the players themselves, and on the score of brilliancy in the game itself; assuming, of course, that everything possible be done to promote order and fairness throughout? At the worst, it cannot be a very iniquitous kind of indulgence, and one does not often have it at its worst.

It is a pity that the sacrilegious book-maker should intrude upon the scene of these great football matches. He is not a pleasant object, and his strident offers of "six to four" or "evens" are irritants to many of us. But he is where he is in defiance of by-laws and placards, and in justice to the people it must be said that he does not seem to flourish on his football investments. Nothing is less likely

than collusion betwixt him and a body of professional players. As a rule, the "esprit de corps" in a League—as a typical professional—team is very keen. The committee, too, are not slow to mark any manifest shortcomings in the players. While the people themselves, at the back of committee and players alike, are the truest critics of all. Unless he were an utter reprobate and anxious to leave the neighbourhood, no professional would dare thus to sell his individual honour, at the risk, moreover, of selling it in vain, seeing that he could not answer for his ten comrades in the field as well as for himself.

There are, we have been told, black sheep in every fold. Metaphor apart, in professional football it may be said that the better the management of the team, the fewer the black sheep on its list. It is all very well to charge the members of a team with discreditable conduct when a series of unexpected losses come to dishearten both them and their followers. In such contingencies the rule, "Cherchez l'administration," may really be said to hold. If the members of the committee are all or half publicans—an improbable supposition, by the way—or mainly individuals with scant practical knowledge of football, next to no acquaintance with the rather odd underlying principles upon which a successful professional team of football players has to be raised, and with the bump of vanity on each of their heads extravagantly large—then there is sure to be trouble with the team early in the season. The public who wear its colours, keep its corporate photograph as an "eikon" in the cherished corner of their parlours, and swear by the team as the best in England, are apt to rave when the fruits of mismanagement declare themselves in the dwindling of the prestige of their darlings. Nor do they seem so very unreasonable if they prefer to clamour against the committee rather than abuse the players themselves. The latter are mostly mere youths, perhaps a little spoilt. Granted that they have talents—they would not else have been engaged—it is for the committee to see that the best possible is done to keep them from the evil that is in the world, at least until they determine to lease themselves in other directions.

Here is brief testimony on the subject. The following words are from an irate layman and enthusiast at a special meeting of one of the leading Association and

League teams in the land, called to consider its fallen condition and the remedy for its misfortunes:

"What is the cause of the shady play of the team in the out matches?" (hear, hear) "and can that play help causing suspicion? The Club should be, 'like Pharaoh's wife, above suspicion'" (loud laughter, and cries of "Read your Bible," "What about Cæsar?"). "The Club has lost the public confidence, and the cause of it is the drink element" (prolonged and general cheering). "The men have been encouraged to drink by those entrusted with the management of the Club" ("No, no," and "Quite right"). "Discipline has become a myth, training has been neglected, players have been drunk when they should have been training" ("Shame"). "The police have had to be called in at two or three o'clock on a Saturday morning to quell a drunken disturbance in the players' house, when they were due to leave the railway station at nine o'clock the same morning to play an important out League match" ("Shame," and sensation). "And, notwithstanding all these things, the Committee has not taken any action to protest against them."

As a sequel to the above meeting, the Committee implicated was called upon to resign, and resign it did. The public are pure in these matters, and the players are just what the dominating spirit, either their particular public or the committee, purpose to make them.

On the other hand, with a conscientious and able directorate, the career of a football player ought to be a delightful and dignified one. The laurels of victory are shared between players and directors. The latter keep the cups which are the trophies of the team's progress. They also, of course, control the exchequer. The former receive with heartfelt smiles the weekly wage which is proffered them smilingly. Added to their stipulated pay, they as often as not pocket an extra five or ten shillings weekly for important wins away from home. If the club's finances are very flourishing—and with gates of two hundred pounds or three hundred pounds weekly they well may be—it is perfectly just that the team should occasionally be treated with what are called "playing tours," either in the neighbourhood of the metropolis or in Scotland. Here they are fêted as they deserve to be. When the Sunderland team visited the Oval a few months ago to

play the Corinthians, private boxes at the theatre were placed at their disposal. The same notable team were also entertained at a banquet in their own town by Lord Londonderry; and when they travelled south for the Christmas campaign of 1892, they journeyed in a special saloon decorated snugly with holly and mistletoe. The Sunderland centre forward took it into his head to marry when his team was performing doughty deeds in the field. A subscription list was promptly opened on his behalf and headed with ten pounds. At the altar and subsequently he received the congratulations and blessings of a thousand or two admirers.

Of such are the rewards lavished on the skilled football professional who does his duty in the station of life to which circumstances and inclination have consecrated him. Every one is pleased with him—though in such a case "pleased" is far too insignificant a word. He earns excellent wages; sees a good deal of life; keeps himself physically in the best of health; and perhaps even lends his revered name for a new lotion, embrocation, football, or necktie. He is, in short, a thoroughly successful young man, and that without having done wrong to any man.

The members of the Sunderland team are the most typical of the existing English Association football professionals. They headed the League last year, in which for a spell the famous Preston North End held pre-eminence. Wherever they go about the land they are sure of an immense crowd of spectators. But they cannot compare with the Everton team in the support they receive at home. These clever lads, at the sixteen League contests of 1892-3, played before two hundred and sixty-three thousand people; giving an average of about sixteen thousand five hundred at each home match. Such magnificent patronage is of itself a stimulant towards excellence. It also means a handsome balance at the bank for the club; so much so that the Everton committee can afford to be almost reckless in their hire of new youngsters of promise in Scotland and elsewhere, and in their offers of extra "solatia" to the players for desirable wins away from home.

Were we mortals in other respects within viewing distance of perfection, we would fain lament the potency of filthy lucre in football affairs. As matters are, it seems needless either to bemoan or to be glad of it. The public, who enjoy the



thrills professional football affords them—and that in no brutal sense—are under no compulsion to analyse the ingredients of their dish of pleasure. And, as we have said, even if they did so, there would, four times out of five, be nothing discoverable to adulterate the integrity of their joy.

Professional football is professional self-control above all things. This must not be forgotten. There are many branches of human education. It is not given to all to graduate at Universities. Discipline of mind and body may be obtained quite as satisfactorily in the football field as in class-rooms and in pastime circles pure and simple. To our thinking, for instance, there is something that almost touches the sublime in the public announcement that a team of football professionals "have volunteered to be kept together on Sunday, and debar themselves of Christmas festivities so as to keep in condition for the important matches on the following day." Yet this occurred in the Midlands in 1892. The players were all lusty young men in the prime of their energy, and they could thus for honour's sake—plus perhaps a little cash—submit to self-mortification! Some may think this detail a sordid one. For our part we are content to estimate it much more nobly.

It were idle to deny that there are black spots on the picture of professional football, done after nature. But that is a defect which it shares with most other human inventions. The public cannot have their feast of sensations without sometimes getting more sensation for their sixpences than they desire. Nowhere as on a famous football field may one realise the eccentricity of human nature, and how men may become passion-driven almost in spite of themselves. It must be painful indeed to be howled at, as the referee not infrequently is, because he gives a decision which is righteous enough, yet not in keeping with the wishes of the multitude. It must be still more annoying for that gentleman when after a match he is followed by an enraged mob to the station, a distance of a mile or more, has his hat "knocked" off by stones, which might have killed him, and is besmeared with mud. This actual experience is by no means unique.

As a companion picture, however, you must see that of the same public when the team of their heart's delight is doing well.

How their faces beam with honest pride! Laughter then ripples on all lips. Instead of ill-sounding abuse, you hear adjectives and phrases of endearment, garnished it may be with other adjectives of an unpleasant kind which are civil or uncivil according to tone. This self-content is apt to prove contagious. It spreads from one dusky-skinned and corrugated artisan to another. It sets old and toothless men grinning with gladness, and swearing they "have never seen nowt to ekal that." It makes the youngsters almost beside themselves with enthusiasm. The committee are touched by it. They may be seen having bouts of glee like the spectators, and clapping their own thighs or each other's shoulders in the strenuousness of their satisfaction. And, lastly, it affects the players themselves, the source and support of all this jubilation. These, having proved their superiority by a stout majority of goals, now "make rings round" their humbled antagonists, and divert the multitude with a deal of "gallery play"; antics rather of the circus ring than the football field. So it continues until the whistle blows. Then a resounding shout rings as the afternoon's epilogue, and you may chance to see certain of the heroes of the victory carried shoulder high to the dressing-room—regardless of the grime and other marks of vigorous labour with which they are decorated.

You may look on but one of these two pictures and say, "Such is professional football!"—choosing the bright or the forbidding picture, according to your bias or humour. But the man who wishes to be just ought to put them both side by side: ugliness and exhilaration hand in hand. It is very, very human, this modern mania. And just for that reason, if for no other, we for our part like it.

## A PHANTOM FORTUNE.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

MR. JESPER TODD, calling one morning at the lodgings of his friend, Tom Kirtley, found that individual in his easy-chair enjoying an after-breakfast pipe. Mr. Todd, fresh from his own trim home, thought the room terribly dingy and untidy. The breakfast-things were still on the table, the dust lay thick on the sideboard, a large cross-bred bull-terrier slept in a corner of the sofa, and Tom Kirtley's feet occupied the only spare chair. Mr.

Todd knew not where to put his hat; yet his friend looked up at him with the smile of a perfectly contented man.

"Ab, old fellow," he said, "can't you find a place for your hat? Put it down on the sofa. Peter won't touch it."

But Mr. Todd evidently distrusted Peter, for he kept his hat in his hand.

"I think, Kirtley," he said, "you get worse, and I am sure your lodgings do. There was certainly a hat-stand in the passage the last time I was here."

"Yes," replied Mr. Kirtley, "there was; but I advised the old woman to sell it. The upstairs lodgers would play at first man out take the best tile, and it bred bad blood. But sit down and have a smoke."

Mr. Todd refused to smoke, though he took the chair which had hitherto supported his friend's feet. He was, he said, on his way to a meeting of the committee of Mrs. Simpson Porlock's Society for the Promotion of Refinement among the Middle Classes; and though that body had not as yet passed a formal resolution on the subject, he thought the general feeling of the members was in favour of putting down the use of tobacco.

"Kate," he concluded, "wants you to come and lunch with us to-morrow. We have a meeting in the afternoon in connection with the society. Mr. Prater Peck will speak on 'Refinement in the School,' and we thought that you, as a teacher, would be interested in the subject."

Mr. Kirtley smiled.

"Your wife's very good," he said, and then stopped.

"Well, will you come?" asked his friend.

"Really, old fellow," replied he, "I don't like to refuse, though that kind of thing is out of my line altogether; but I'm afraid I can't. One Mr. John Lynch, solicitor, Silby-on-Stoar, is due to call here at eleven, and will probably want me all to-morrow. You didn't know I'd come into a fortune?"

"No; have you, though?" said Mr. Todd, in the doubtful tone of one who suspects at least exaggeration.

"Yes," replied his friend. "None of your nineteen-guinea legacies, but every penny of a hundred a year in Consols. You never knew my great-aunt, Mrs. Walker? No more did I, but she must have heard of me, for the doubtless veracious Lynch of Silby says she has left me her little all. We broke up two days

ago. His letter came yesterday, and I'm going to retire."

"Indeed," said Mr. Todd, as heartily as his somewhat formal manner would let him, "I am delighted to hear this, Kirtley. I have often suspected that your sphere of labour was uncongenial to you. And what do you intend to do now?"

"Do?" repeated Mr. Kirtley, looking puzzled; "do—why, nothing, of course. That is, if you mean in the way of work. As to amusement, I'm game for anything within the compass of two pounds a week. Just at present I think I shall stay in town as long as there is any decent cricket to watch, and then tramp or tricycle about the country during the autumn. In the winter I might pop over to Sweden for some skating. Living's cheap in Stockholm, and the fare over isn't much."

"But," remonstrated Mr. Todd, "you surely will, after your holiday, devote your life to some useful object? Why not go in for literature, or read for the bar, if you object to teaching?"

"Why not?" replied his friend. "Well, to speak in parables, do you think an emancipated cab-horse with the chance of kicking up his heels in a field for the rest of his days would prefer to go into a training stable? Work! Why, you rich men, with the fads you call useful occupations, don't know what it is. When next week's dinners depend on this week's wages, then you find out what it means. Besides, the crowd round the ladders which lead to fame and fortune is quite big enough without me."

"But," persisted Mr. Todd, "you, with your abilities, might easily pass through the crowd, and win a footing on a ladder."

"Might I?" rejoined the other. "What if my toes are tender, and can't stand the preliminary trampling! No, no; the crowd looks uncomfortable and the ladders unsafe. A hundred a year is more than my share of the common stock, and I'll be content with it."

"In my opinion," said Mr. Todd, "that spirit of content has been your greatest enemy. You were satisfied with a pass degree at Cambridge; you cheerfully accepted a situation at ninety pounds a year, and now for ten years you have contentedly remained in it without even trying to raise yourself in your profession. Why, your salary has only been increased ten pounds a year in all that time, though I have often advised you to ask for more."

"When you knew very well," replied his friend, laughing, "that I wasn't worth it. No, the boss and I understood each other very well. He took the worry and the profits; I had the drudgery and the peace of mind. Each thought he had the best of the bargain."

"Well, then," persisted Mr. Todd, "putting ambition on one side, surely you will not be willing to lead an utterly useless life. Why not join us in doing good? Mrs. Todd would make you an assistant-secretary directly."

"To which society?" asked Mr. Kirtley, with a twinkle in his eye. "Don't you remember when your wife was president of the Association for the Prevention of Young Women going out Alone, I offered my services as an escort, and she wouldn't have 'em? Is that society still alive?"

"Well—er, no; not exactly," replied Mr. Todd. "You know the Dowager Countess of Featherly took it up because her son married that little milliner he used to meet going to work as he was going to bed; but when Featherly's wife reformed him, the Dowager made friends with her, and then turned round and ridiculed the society so much that we deemed it best to merge it in a more general mission. It really did useful work," concluded he, with a sigh.

"I dare say it did," rejoined the incorrigible Kirtley, "if you call that sort of thing useful. Did it never strike you that your plan of finding out what people like, and then forming a society to put it down, would bring the leisured classes to grief if you were strong enough to carry out your fads? The unmitigated dulness of his life would drive the working man to desperation, and he'd go for you and yours just for the sake of a little excitement."

"I fear," said Mr. Todd, with the smile of conscious superiority, "we shall never agree upon the subject of philanthropic effort. But come up to Highgate as soon as you have settled matters with Mr. Lynch, and Kate shall talk to you."

Mr. Kirtley promised, and his friend went off to his meeting.

Tom Kirtley and Jesper Todd were natives of the same provincial town. Tom's father, whom everybody thought well-to-do, sent his son to college, and died without a penny; Mr. Todd, senior, left Jesper two thousand a year. When Tom took a situation as assistant in a private school, Jesper came to London to

look about him. He found and married a girl with a fortune nearly equal to his own, and the pair had for ten years devoted most of their energies and a little of their money to trying to enter "the best society" by the gate of pseudo-philanthropy.

They flattered themselves they had succeeded, if not in entering the gate, in undermining the approaches. They went on deputations to Home Secretaries; their names were often found in the obscurer corners of newspapers; occasionally their societies were the subject of a scoffing leaderette. The notoriety hunter would rather be scoffed at than not noticed, so they were not without hope.

On the departure of his friend, Mr. Kirtley replaced his feet on the chair, refilled his pipe, and resumed his meditations. He was a very lazy man, and, strange to say, knew it. He did not, like most of his kind, blame everything but indolence for his want of success in life. His life was rather lonely; disparity of income is, after all, a great bar to friendship, and as the friends of his youth rose in the social scale they dropped the habit of association with the man who remained behind. Tom did not complain; prosperous men rather bored him than otherwise, they took things in such an absurdly serious way.

As to his moral character, he was a good-natured soul enough, though far too indolent to go out of his way to do a kindness. His dog he had picked up, a lost puppy, and he was very fond of it; but had it died, his joy at being free from the trouble it gave—a fighting bull-terrier is a pet not exactly suited to London lodgings—would probably have equalled his grief at its loss.

His tastes were simple, and his habits, even when on pleasure bent, economical. He had just decided that he would devote his savings, which he now felt justified in spending, to a long walking tour, when Mr. Lynch arrived.

The attorney was a rubicund, cheerful-looking personage—quite the right sort of man to arrange the transfer of a good legacy from a not too near relative. Tom guessed from his manner that his clients were mostly farmers and small tradesmen.

"All the better for me," thought he. "Won't charge so much as a regular tip-top adviser to the county families."

"Mr. Kirtley, I presume," began the lawyer. "Allow me to congratulate you,

sir. If you have no objection, will you call in your landlady just to give formal evidence of your identity? You have lived here eight years, I believe? Quite so; thank you."

The landlady was summoned and said what was required, whereupon Mr. Lynch continued:

"Can you oblige me by being at the Bank at ten to-morrow? Rather an inconveniently early hour for a Londoner, I fear."—Mr. Lynch had a fixed idea, probably based on his own habits when in town, that all Londoners went to bed at two a.m.—"but I like to combine pleasure with business on these little expeditions, and want to go to the Oval afterwards. I love a bit of good cricket."

"So do I, Mr. Lynch," rejoined Tom, "and I intended to look for it to-morrow at the same place, so your time will just suit me."

"Won't you stop," he went on as the attorney rose to go, "and have something to eat? You must be ready for it after your journey. I have some decent stout on draught in the corner there, and they will cook us a steak in no time."

Mr. Lynch's merry eye glistened as he replied:

"Thank you, Mr. Kirtley; but I confess I am peckish, and stout and steak to equal the London articles we can't get in the country. Why, I don't know, but so it is. Cricketer yourself, sir?"

"When I'm not too lazy," replied Tom, and then they talked cricket till the steak was ready. After it had been eaten, Mr. Lynch again prepared to depart; but the pair were on capital terms by this time, and Tom detained him, saying:

"Sit down, man, and have a smoke. I want to talk to you about that legacy. You know, I never saw my great-aunt Walker. I suppose you knew her well?"

"I thought I did," replied the attorney; "but, to tell the truth, her will surprised me."

"Indeed!" said Tom. "Then I suppose I was not her nearest relation?"

"Well," said the attorney, hesitating, "in the eye of the law you were. But—but the late Mr. Walker left two offspring. The widow, strange to say, on her husband's death forty years ago, took these offspring, a boy and a girl, to live with her, and everybody thought she would leave them her money. But it's my belief that she hated them—a precious life she led them both, I've heard since her death—and this was

her revenge on them, their mother, and their—well, to strain a point, call him father."

"Then I presume," said Tom, "that my great-aunt was not exactly an amiable character."

"There are people," replied Mr. Lynch enigmatically, "of whom, when alive, the law of slander, and when dead, custom, forbids us to speak our minds. I am very much afraid, sir, Mrs. Walker was one of them."

"But, Mr. Lynch," asked Tom, "how are these offspring, as you call them, situated? Forty years ago. Why, they must be middle-aged now."

"Over fifty, both of them," replied Mr. Lynch. "But it is a sad story. The man is paralysed and half imbecile. The woman, though devoted to her brother, is a poor, helpless creature and not much more agreeable to those around her than her late, shall we say, stepmother? They must go into the House now, I suppose; the man anyhow won't cost the ratepayers much; he'll die, sure as eggs, if they separate him from his sister, as they probably will do."

Tom Kirtley was silent for a few minutes, and then he said:

"You have taken me quite by surprise, Mr. Lynch. I had no idea that there was anything of this kind in the wind. Can't something be done for them?"

"There was some talk down at Silby," replied Mr. Lynch, "of getting thirty families or so to subscribe a shilling a week each. But you know how that sort of thing generally ends; first one drops out, and then another; better let them go on the parish at once than come to it in the end."

"I wish," said Tom, after another pause, "the old woman had left them this money. I hate work, Mr. Lynch, and had intended to do no more, but I don't like the idea of that poor paralysed beggar going to the workhouse. I suppose I must try and do something for them."

"I don't think," said the attorney, "they have much claim on you, Mr. Kirtley. A man can hardly be expected to provide for the illegitimate offspring of his great-uncle by marriage."

"No," replied Tom. "It's not that. It's not their claim but my own peace of mind I'm thinking of. How much a week do you think they could manage with?"

"Well," said the attorney thoughtfully, "they had every material comfort in your

aunt's house. She had a good income, though the bulk of her property reverts to some distant relatives of her husband in Canada. It was, if I may say so without offence, as an expert in the malicious use of the tongue that she took it out of them. I don't think, considering what they have been used to, that they would be comfortable with less than thirty shillings a week. Poverty is, after all, but a relative term."

"Quite right, Mr. Lynch," assented Tom; "I found that out when my poor father died and my allowance stopped. It took me a year or two to find out how to rub along on my salary. Will the Canadian people do anything?"

"Too pious," was the reply.

"Then," said Tom, "I think I had better turn this money over to them and have done with it."

"No, no, my dear sir," said the attorney, "don't do that. In the first place, they are not fit to have the absolute control of such a sum, and in the second, even if you are generous enough to let them have the benefit of it during their lifetime you will in all probability survive them, and might as well have the reversion. Meet me at the Bank as we arranged, and in the meantime think it over."

So saying Mr. Lynch departed, and Tom did think it over. The longer he thought, the more he felt that it would be what in his rough-and-ready system of ethics he called "a dirty trick" to take the money.

"Bother the old woman!" he said to himself. "Why couldn't she leave her money to those who expected it? Can't let that poor beggar go to the work-house, anyway. Wish Lynch had held his tongue and left me in blissful ignorance. Let me see, now. The dividend will be a hundred and one pounds five; had better do the thing well if I do it at all; what with medical comforts, etc., thirty-five bob a week won't leave 'em much to squander foolishly. I'll give them that, and keep the odd ten pounds for 'baccy and emergencies. Dare say Lynch will consent to be almoner. He seems a good sort."

With this he dismissed the subject from his mind, and in the morning told Mr. Lynch the resolution he had formed. The attorney did not attempt to persuade him to change his mind, and refused to charge anything for his professional services in the affair. The pair spent the day together, and parted the best of friends.

According to his promise Tom went next day to the house of his friend, Mr. Jesper Todd. He found that philanthropist and his wife at afternoon tea, and for once in a way there were no visitors present.

"Well, Kirtley," began Mr. Todd, "what about the legacy?"

"There isn't any legacy," replied Tom, "or at least only the shreds of one," and he explained the circumstances of the case.

"I wish," he said in conclusion, "the power of making wills was taken away from spiteful old women."

Mr. and Mrs. Todd looked at each other rather guiltily. The fact was, Mrs. Todd's money had come from a spiteful old woman to whom she had been companion, and whose crowd of needy relatives had said nasty things about her will.

"Don't you think, Kirtley," said Mr. Todd to change the subject, "that you have been rather rash? How do you know this man Lynch's tale was true?"

"Oh! I know a liar when I see him," replied Tom lightly. "Lynch is a real good sort. Insisted on taking me to the match yesterday, and stood dinner, and the play afterwards. I'm off to Silby next week to stay with him for a month, and make the acquaintance of my pensioners."

After this it was clearly no use maintaining that Mr. Lynch might be a swindler, so Mrs. Todd expressed a hope that Mr. Kirtley might find his pensioners worthy of his bounty.

Mr. Kirtley laughed.

"Oh! I don't expect that," he said. "The man's a malicious idiot, and the woman drinks a little. But you can't wonder at it after the life they've led."

Mr. and Mrs. Todd both deacanted upon this flagrant neglect of the first principle of all true charity—worthiness in the recipient; but they produced little effect on Tom, who remarked, as if in excuse of what he had done, that the pair would probably die soon.

"You say that, Mr. Kirtley," said Mrs. Todd severely, "almost as if you hoped they would."

"Hope they will!" echoed Tom. "Of course I hope they will; why should I wish them to live? But I must go now, as I'm due to see Lynch off from King's Cross at six-thirty."

When he had gone, his two friends shook their heads over him sadly, and

remarked feelingly on his heartlessness. They agreed that it would have been quite the proper thing to allow the wretched creatures to go to the workhouse, where the woman's love of drink could have been put under control, but to express a wish for their death was an outrage on the decency of conversation.

Perhaps it was; but on the whole it was lucky for Mr. Walker's unhappy offspring that Mrs. Walker left her money to a man who picked his words less carefully than Mr. Jesper Todd.

#### THE OLD YEAR.

ALL its waning days are counted,  
All its few decaying hours,  
Sacred to the wont and custom  
Of this busy world of ours.

With his strong hand drooping pale'y,  
With his laurel garland sere;  
On the threshold of his death-day,  
Sadly stands the poor old year.

Hush, the sobbing winds are saying,  
Sweeping over glen and lea;  
Hush, the branches murmur, clashing  
High on every leafless tree.

Hush, the river murmurs, ice-bound,  
Stealing to the sheltered dell;  
Earth and sky and life are sighing,  
Time is over, say farewell.

#### THE TWO BOSTONS.

A MUCH larger number of Englishmen know Boston, Massachusetts, than know Boston, Lincolnshire, and the reasons for this are plain. There is the still prevalent notion amongst travelling Britons that their own country needs but little attention at their hands. There is still the fine old crusted belief that Lincolnshire is a county of swamp and ague, unendowed with scenic or any other attractions; a belief fostered by the fact that until within the last year there was no Lincolnshire guide-book worthy of the name.

Yet there is hardly a patch of original fenland in the whole county; and although it cannot be classed amongst the beautiful counties of England, there are attractive pastoral bits about the Wolds, there is a picturesqueness and originality about the flat lands which impresses every visitor who recognises its unique character so far as our country is concerned; each of its chief towns abounds with historical and antiquarian interest, and there is no happier hunting-ground in all England for the ecclesiologist.

The two Bostons, unlike as they are to

each other in their general characteristics, and particularly in their surroundings, have points of resemblance in common. As a body corporate, the American child has long since outstripped the English parent, and, after passing through a period of scholastic, reserved, and, it must be added, priggish stand-offishness, is now striding ahead amongst the foremost commercial and industrial centres of the States. The parent threatened to drift for a while into helpless senility when the foreign trade, which had hitherto been monopolised by the Eastern ports of England, was, by the rise and development of America, transferred to the Western, but Boston was of too sturdy a foundation to be killed by a mere accident; new channels of trade have been opened of recent years, and an American visitor whom we met at the "Peacock" was quite disappointed.

"What did you expect to find?" we asked.

"Well, I guessed I should find a dead, cobwebby sort of old place, and it's so confidently lively."

In Lincolnshire Boston we do not find ourselves in that faint, sad light of other days which impresses us so profoundly in the towns of that other English marshland on the South Coast, such as Sandwich, or Rye, or Romney, or Lydd. He who has worked his way upwards through the Cambridgeshire fens, by such towns as Ramsey, Whittlesea, Thorney, and Crowland, and who anticipates at Boston a repetition of their silence and lifelessness, will be agreeably disappointed.

Improved communications both with sea and land, the formation of new docks, the development of new industries, have given it a new lease of life; it is a brisk, cheerful place, and although it may never attain again to the proud position it once occupied, that of being the third port in the kingdom, it should have a great future before it.

Not that Old Boston has followed the example of many other resuscitated towns, and has cast off from head to foot her ancient clothing in exchange for newer raiment, which she has not yet learned to wear with ease and grace. There is plenty of Old Boston left. There are streets and lanes leading off from the market-place, and down by the waterside, in which not a house is less than a century old, and which can show many dating back to the days of old merchant-princes like the Le

Spaynes, the Kymes, and the Husseys, when Boston had a large trade in wine, corn, and woollens, not only with Germany, and Flanders, and France, but with the great religious houses in all the neighbouring counties.

Quaint old street names such as Gaunt (Ghent) Lane, Wrangle, Wormgate, Prove Lane, and Packhouse Quay, meet us everywhere. Links with the past are continually reminding us that the revival movement is quite modern. The gable end of the old Saint Mary's Guild House, in South Street, still retaining its fine Perpendicular window, recalls the proud days of old when the town was ruled by its guilds, the others being Saint Botolph's, Corpus Christi, Saint George's, Saints Peter and Paul, and the Holy Trinity. Of these the names attached to streets remain, but nothing more.

Close by is the fine old Shodfriars Hall, part, it is said, of an old monastery. In Sibsey Lane, off South Street, are the remains of the old gaol, which in turn succeeded the powerful Dominican foundation—a row of sturdy arches with closely barred windows and stout doors. From this old relic we enter a little square of eighteenth-century houses, occupying the site of part of the friary close, and much visited by antiquaries for the sake of the fine gravestone, built into a house wall, of Wisseles, of Smalenburgh, who died in 1340, no doubt one of the "Esterlings" to whom the town owed so much of its prosperity.

Further along South Street, towards the Docks, we pass under massive iron gates bearing the town arms—a bull (unaccountably described as a ram couchant) on a woolsack, and three ducal coronets, with two mermaids as supporters—and crossing the "Mart Yard," where once the famous Saint Botolph's Fair was held, come to the old Grammar School, built in 1567.

Although South Street leads to the Docks, it has distinctly an old-world air about it. It runs by the side of the Witham, past ranges of old warehouses, and grass-grown quays, and dusty little low-browed inns with nautical signs, and here and there a fine old residence in its pleasant garden; so that without much straining of the imagination we can picture the scenes of excitement and animation hereabouts when the Esterling ships came sailing up with goods for the fair, and the purveyors from the great abbey came ambling in to purchase their winter stores of sound wine and stout woollens.

No brand-new hotel has yet supplanted

the "Peacock"—a study in itself of old-world domestic construction, full of quaint little rooms, dark corners, odd, uneven passages, and meaningless-looking staircases; and with a panelled coffee-room containing a carved oaken chimney-piece of the same character as, but more elaborate than that which used to be in the chop-room of the old "Cock Tavern" in Fleet Street.

The glory of Boston is the church dedicated to Saint Botolph, who shares with Saint Nicholas the distinction of being the patron of mariners; and the glory of Boston Church is its tower, known throughout the length and breadth of fen-land as Boston Stump.

From afar Boston Stump proclaims the whereabouts of Boston. The mariner at sea strains his eyes for its guiding finger. The fen men for miles around base their weather prognostications upon the clearness or obscurity of its appearance. The pedestrian and the wheelman far away on the straight, dusty fen-land roads, make for it just as in the old wayfaring days did pilgrims, packmen, and pedlars, toiling along the monk-built causeways, which at rare intervals stretched across the wild, weird, lone expanse of quaking bog. A thing of beauty of which the eye never wearies is Boston Stump. Three grand storeys surmounted by a graceful octagon lantern, formed by arches turned diagonally over the angles of the tower, spring to a height of two hundred and sixty-three feet from foundations, courses of which have been found to extend under the river-bed.

In the third storey formerly hung the great beacon lamp, but when the octagon was added the lamp was placed therein, and the third storey became a belfry. The somewhat gaunt and bare appearance of its great arches, unrelieved by transom or tracery, still point to its original use. The tower was commenced on Palm Sunday, 1309, and finished in five years—thoroughly finished, too, for not a flaw or crack is perceptible in the masonry from top to bottom.

The church itself may be described as vast and imposing, rather than beautiful. Time and the hands of men have dealt hardly with it. Of its famous stained glass, hardly a fragment remains; of its numerous brasses, only one or two are now to be seen; the beautiful choir stalls have but recently had their canopies replaced; the rood loft has been destroyed; very few of the numerous monuments to

Church dignitaries and old Boston merchant-princes, for which it was renowned, exist; and the modern chime of bells harmonise but poorly with the magnificent tower in which they are hung.

A very striking view of the height of the tower may be had by standing beneath the vault and looking upwards to the base of the third storey—an unbroken vista of smooth, fresh-looking stone, delicately carved and moulded into a most harmonious and graceful "tout-ensemble." Small wonder is it that Americans flock to Old Boston in such numbers. In the town-hall, no doubt Brewster and his companion Pilgrim Fathers were brought up before the magistrates, after the frustration of their projected escape from Laud's persecution to Holland. Of the original founders of New Boston, who sailed with Winthrop in 1630, John Cotton was Vicar of Old Boston, Atherton Hough was mayor, Bellingham was recorder, Leverett was alderman; three Boston men became governors of Massachusetts, and one, Coddington by name, was known as the "father of Rhode Island."

At any rate, it is a subject of common remark in Boston that American visitors not only require no guides about the town, but seem to know very much more about its ins and outs and prominent features than the majority of natives, go direct to all the points of interest, and have the histories of them at their tongues' ends.

In one respect Old Boston is very much less attractive than its namesake across the Atlantic. Its natural surroundings are decidedly unlovely and uninteresting. Approached from any quarter the prospect is the same. Flat land, unbroken by the merest pimple of a hill, stretching as far as the eye can range; every acre of it cultivated to the highest pitch of perfection; the monotony of the scene varied only by an occasional clump of wind-tossed trees, or a minaret-topped windmill, or a cluster of heavily-thatched cottages round about one of the bridges which cross the innumerable dykes by which the country is intersected in all directions, or by one of the stately church towers for which the county is famed.

Straight as arrows run the fen-land roads, raised high upon banks of luxuriant grass above the dykes of which the dark motionless water is rich with crowfoot, and brook-lily, and meadow-sweet, and the great blue water forget-me-not. In the more sequestered regions we may meet

with some of the ancient feathered inhabitants of fen-land, with the sharp-billed, shrieking curlew, the white-tailed sand-piper, the bullying Norway crows, the heron, and black-backed gulls, but the roar of the Lincolnshire agricultural machinery seems to have frightened them away from more frequented districts, and the solemn stillness of the air, even during the spring months, is remarkable.

But he who thinks to see a relic of primitive fen hereabouts will be disappointed. The new lease of life taken by Boston after its decay seemed assured, when the discovery of America led to a transfer of trade from East to West, when the River Witham began to silt up, when the dissolution of the monasteries deprived Boston merchants of a most valuable outlet for their trade, is distinctly reflected in the country around. The men are fine, stalwart fellows, the women fresh-coloured, and the children no longer prematurely crippled with ague, rheumatism, and the other ills inseparable from life in a marshy country. The cottages are neat and clean, beggars are rare, indeed during ten days, tramping through the fen-country, we did not meet one.

No. He who comes hither in search of the picturesque is doomed to disappointment, but the human interest of the land is intense.

Fresh from Old Boston, the huge Massachusetts city becomes invested with double interest in the eyes of the traveller. Great as is the change which has been wrought in Old Boston during the past quarter of a century, still more remarkable is that which has affected the American city. When Oliver Wendell Holmes, essentially the "doyen" of Boston, first attracted the world to his Breakfast Table, Boston stood aloof from the other cities of the States, prided itself upon the exclusive and almost aristocratic tone of its society, and upon its character as an oasis of culture and intellectual refinement amidst a bald, prosaic desert, wherein men drove themselves crazy with the "auri sacra fames." Poets, thinkers, dilettanti, found in the stately saloons of Old Beacon Street a congenial atmosphere which was denied them in Madison Avenue and Walnut Street; and in old-world houses which might have been transplanted bodily from some old-world English provincial town, the chosen people—that is, the scions of old Knickerbocker



and New England families, and the men and women of culture—met together to snub the outside money-grubbers, to pat each other on the shoulder, and to glory in the fate which had made them residents in the Hub of the Universe.

But much of this feeling has been swept away in the inexorable torrent of the World's Progress. Your latest made Boston citizen still calls his city the Hub, but he is much too practical and far-sighted a man to believe it to be so in its original sense. Boston has become not only essentially a city of business, but actually it has become a city of Irishmen. The proud old families, tracing their descent to East Anglian families, who once ruled the roost, have been edged into the side paths, whilst the Irish Mayor and the Irish Councillors, and their following of Irish merchants, tradesmen, and rowdies, swarm down the high-road, yelling what a quarter of a century ago would have been accounted absolute heresy.

Still, the first remark made by the English visitor to Boston is, "How English it all looks!" The lines upon which the old Colonists planned their town—that is to say, after the good Old Country fashion, upon no lines at all, but anyhow, higgledy-piggledy, just where a choice lot protruded itself in front of the Puritan nose—are still followed in the heart of the city proper; and the English visitor notes, perhaps for the first time during his exploration of American cities, winding streets intersected by innumerable lanes, and alleys, and footways, breaking out occasionally into squares, or circles, or triangles, just as he left behind him in old London City.

Moreover, the existence of the Common in the very midst of everything increases the illusion of being in England, particularly when we look at that part of Beacon Street which fronts it, and remember to have seen the twin brethren of these old, white window-framed, quaintly portalled, big-chimneyed houses, in many a quiet old English town, and in every old-fashioned London suburb, and when we look up at the big elm-trees on the Tremont Street side and recognise at once their nationality.

Of course the American street is there. Directly Beacon Street quits the Park, and gets on to the reclaimed land of the Back Bay, it becomes straight, broad, new, and magnificent. Commonwealth and Columbus Avenues are simply lines of palaces, and

in every direction are springing up straight streets of splendid mansions, which take us with a very sudden and long jump from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Let it be recorded to the credit of the Bostonians that they treasure fondly the relics which have come down to them from the old days. The old State House still stands midway between State and Court Streets. These were christened King and Queen Streets, and the Royal Arms shone upon the State House—or, as it was known, the Town House—summit; but who can blame patriotic Bostonians for wiping away names which meant but bullying and injustice to them, and for leaving Lion and Unicorn with nothing to take care of?

Still stands Faneuil Hall, built in 1742, and called the "Cradle of Liberty" from the patriotic meetings which were held within its walls during the War of Independence; and, strange to say, close to it the statue of Winthrop, the first personal embodiment of that Royal power which was to be hurled down with such a rude crash. Still stands the old King's Chapel, with unchanged title, whereto proceeded in due state on Sunday mornings their Excellencies and the élite of the old Boston courtly society, and the old King's Chapel burial-ground, dating from 1630. Still stands the Old South Church in the very busiest and noisiest part of Boston's busiest and noisiest street, and on a tablet over the entrance we read: "Old South Church gathered 1669. First House built 1620. This House erected 1729. Deseccrated by British Troops 1775-6."

More than one attempt has been made to remove it in sacrifice to the Juggernaut of Business, but Boston's doughtiest champions, Dr. Holmes and Mr. Lowell, raised their voices with such effect on its behalf that it has been spared, and a "New Old South" has been fearfully and wonderfully constructed elsewhere.

Many another old-time relic remains—burial-grounds, such as the Granary, the Copps Hill, and the Old Central; houses, such as the Auchmuty Mansion, the Edes House, and the "Old Corner Book Store"; churches, such as old Christ Church; and spots famous in the stirring history of the last colonial period.

The charm of Boston lies very much in the fact that the new only serves to accentuate the old. Somehow, the Old South and the State House do not look out of place amidst the crash and turmoil of

Washington Street — once called, be it remarked, Marlborough Street. Their surroundings actually support them instead of rendering them ridiculous. The street winds and turns; no two houses are alike, and the palatial pile of the nineteenth-century insurance building or newspaper office jostles in the friendliest manner a gambrel-roofed, dormer-windowed structure such as the Old Corner Book Store, which was a book store in the days of Crispus Attuck and the "Boston Massacre."

But to our mind the centre of Boston's charm is the Common. The venerable elms; the Long Walk, which played so pleasant a part in the courtship of the Autocrat and the Schoolmistress; the pleasant leaf-shaded Mall under Beacon Street, of which the old-world houses peep through the foliage; the Old Central Burial Ground, with its lichen-grown slate tombstones—these led our steps far more readily to the Common than to the garish and overpoweringly wealthy-looking avenues of fashion.

Yet it was in the very centre of the fashionable part of Beacon Street that we found our beloved Autocrat at home. It may be readily believed that his study window did not look out upon the broad street, with its ceaseless stream of fashionable equipages and its faultlessly arrayed human swarm.

"When I look out," he said, "I have my whole life spread before me. There are the roofs of old Cambridge, where I was born, bred, and educated. There runs the Charles River, which I call my aviary, and on which I used to row long before rowing became an universal pastime; and there, on that wooded height, is Mount Auburn, where all my dearest friends lie buried. They are going to blot it all out with new buildings, and a new bridge has already cut off a big slice of my view; but it will last my time—it will last my time!"

If we weary of Boston itself, we can never weary of its suburbs—to our mind the most beautiful suburbs of any city in the world. There is Brookline, an undulating tract of woodland, dotted with villas, no two of which are alike, of which many are pretty and picturesque, some are simply curious examples of eccentricity, and a few are monstrosities. There is pleasant, rural Dorchester, and the Dorchester heights whence a grand panorama of Boston Harbour and Bay is obtained. There is Roxbury; there is Brighton,

beyond which is the famous Chestnut Hill Park and Corey Hill. Finally there is Cambridge, in which is incorporated Harvard with its old-world, stately group of buildings; Stoughton, Hollis, Massachusetts, and Harvard Halls and Holden Chapel. In Cambridge itself there is Longfellow's house, the Washington elm bearing the inscription, "Under this tree Washington first took command of the American Army, July 3<sup>d</sup>, 1775," and many an old-world house, of which perhaps the Wadsworth House, where the principals of Harvard used to reside, is the quaintest specimen. Still further afield are two excursions which no Englishman should fail to make.

The first is to Lexington, by the Boston and Maine Railroad, alighting at the station known as Munroe's, and proceeding along the course of the fighting on that eventful April day when we first loosened a hold on our magnificent colonies which was destined never to be fast again, as far as Concord. Every foot of the six miles of road has its interesting and stirring if, from an Englishman's point of view, rather humiliating association. Every historic spot has been carefully labelled, so that the traveller may literally read as he runs—or rather saunters, for hurry seems out of place amidst such solemn surroundings.

Let him note at Concord the original Old Manse of Hawthorne, into the boundary wall of which has been built that stone simply inscribed "Grave of British Soldiers," which inspired Russell Lowell's well-known poem. Let him stand on the bridge—which, by the way, is not the original "rude bridge that arch'd the flood"—and try to realise, amidst the absolute peace and silence of the scene, the momentous events of that sweltering April day when Earl Percy's veterans fled in ignominious rout beneath the hidden fire of a rabble of ill-armed, ill-disciplined farmers and ploughboys.

The second expedition is to quaint Salem, one of the least American of American towns, famous as having been the town in which in 1774 Massachusetts State assumed sovereign power, as the cradle of many generations of fine old sea-dogs, as the birthplace of Hawthorne, whose "House of the Seven Gables" is still shown, and as having been the scene of the Witch persecution of 1692.

Here we take our leave of the two Bostons. He who visits the one, and omits the other, leaves an interesting

chapter in comparative history unread; he who visits both realises more fully than before the truth of two famous sayings: that of Garrick, "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind," and that of Shakespeare, "one touch of Nature makes the whole world kin."

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER VI.

FRAMED in the dark oak doorway was a most beautiful woman. To Leila's countrified and unsophisticated eyes, she was dressed for a Court gala. Her dress was of the richest mauve-tinted silk. On the bare white arms and throat, on her fingers, in her dusky hair, blazed a splendour of diamonds. The very fan she carried was encrusted with them.

As Leila, dazzled and startled by the radiant vision, looked at Mrs. Anson, Mrs. Anson stared back in undisguised disappointment and disapproval, at her new governess.

But the next second the annoyance vanished, and she came forward with the loveliest of smiles. No welcome could have been more kindly and friendly.

"I do hope you won't find it dull!" said Mrs. Anson, after enquiries as to her comfort since her arrival. "We are miles away from every one!" Her voice was soft and musical. She spoke English fluently, the slight foreign accent giving it a delightful piquancy. "I was so sorry I could not come to meet you. But I was too ill to leave my room. So I sent a message to my brother-in-law, who was coming by the same train, to look after you. I hope he did so properly."

But a recollection of the look of blank astonishment and annoyance on Mr. Hesketh Anson's face, when he was apparently apprised for the first time of her existence, and his rudeness at the end of the journey, kept her silent. She was the soul of truth, and her narrow social training had not so far given her the ready wit to utter a polite commonplace.

"And Dolores! I hope you will like her. She is rather spoilt, I am afraid; but she is delicate. She is very imaginative and excitable too, and—requires a good deal of care, to prevent her mind running on unhealthy fancies. Ah! she has been talking already!" with intense annoyance

and a quick, keen glance into Leila's face. "I am so sorry. I was so hoping that she was forgetting that absurd notion. What has she been saying?"

Leila told her.

Mrs. Anson uttered an impatient exclamation.

"It is too absurd! How I hate that ridiculous story—I hope you don't believe in ghosts!"

Leila laughed, flushing the next moment, as she recalled her own inexplicable terror in the train the previous day.

"You will not allow it to scare you away like the rest of them! Elderly educated women, too! I can't think how they could be so silly. Perhaps I had better tell you the story, so that you will not be treated to all the thrilling additions coined by kitchen-maids and country folk. I need hardly ask you," with a pretty appealing, "not to listen to the chatter of the servants or village people, who will all be dying until they can tell it to you."

"I will not talk about it to any one," said Leila, on the impulse of the moment.

"The story runs, that nearly two hundred years ago the heir to this place disappeared. You must know, Miss Mallet, that my husband only bought this estate a few years ago, so it is really hard that we should be troubled with the family ghosts. He was a boy of about twelve, and it was generally believed that the uncle, the next-of-kin, knew more about his fate than he chose to say. But the suspicion was never proved, and he inherited the property, his own descendants enjoying it after him. But it was said that the inheritance did his branch of the family little good. His descendants were a bad and spendthrift set. The family's good name and fortune, with its position in the county, gradually declined. Its members were avoided by their neighbours. About ten years ago, my husband bought the estate from the last owner, who is now living on a rancho in South America. The ghost said to haunt the house is, of course, the spirit of the lost heir. He is called the Gray Boy, because he is always seen dressed in grey—that being the colour of the suit he wore when he disappeared. But there is a touch of commonplace prose in the mysterious visitant's appearance. He used to appear to each successive generation in the same style of dress as they themselves were wearing, changing his fashions as

time changed theirs. What is the matter, Miss Mallett?"

"Nothing!" laughing off the slight chill that had touched her, "only," shyly, "it makes the story more—thrilling, I think—the ghost changing his clothes. It seems almost as if he meant to show them that he did not belong to the dead past, but was an ever-living reminder in their own daily lives of the crime," she said hastily, startled by something that swept over Mrs. Anson's face. But the shadow passed, and Mrs. Anson laughed merrily.

"What a queer fancy! It is rather horrible, too. Somehow, such an idea never struck me before. I only thought of him as a ghost with an unusual wardrobe. Mostly they only seem to have the garment in which they stand upright. But," the flippancy vanishing into winning earnestness, "you will promise me not to let such a nonsensical story frighten you away?"

She held out her hand with a smile. Touched and fascinated, Leila laid hers in it.

"I will not go unless you wish me to," she said simply. But in her heart it was a promise.

She had only left the room a few moments when Leila discovered that she had forgotten her fan. She hurried after her with it.

But she did not overtake her, after all. Just as she was near the end of the passage leading from the school-room wing into the long corridor, which ran the length of the house, she caught the sound of Mrs. Anson's voice. She could not see her, as she had passed through the archway into the corridor, where she had apparently met some one.

"Oh, Hex! What a shocking little dowl! She isn't much of an acquisition, certainly. She looks like a shy schoolgirl. You must have had a depressing journey from the station with her," with a laugh.

"Look here, Charlotte, the sooner you get rid of her the better! How can you be such——"

"A fool!" with a soft laugh. "But confess—isn't she an improvement——"

Leila did not hear the end of the sentence, for she was speeding back to the other wing, carrying the fan with her.

The snow-storm continued. For two days the snow fell almost ceaselessly. The roads became impassable, and for nearly a fortnight Leila and her pupil were almost

entirely confined to the grounds. With the exception of Mrs. Anson's society, she being often with them, the life she and her pupil lived was isolated enough. During all that time she only saw Mr. Anson once. Dolores brought her father one afternoon into the school-room to introduce him to her new governess. He stayed and had tea with them, and was almost boisterously cheerful. Leila hardly saw in his appearance the signs of the great delicacy of which Dolores had spoken.

She and her pupil had that portion of the house almost entirely to themselves. They had their meals there together, and except when she and Dolores went out together, she had rarely occasion to go into any other part of the house. The attention shown her when she first arrived was always continued. She was well waited on, but almost entirely by Martha. The school-room maid was a dull, half-witted English girl, who did her work and went away without speaking.

Leila, remembering her promise, coldly discouraged every attempt on the part of the only other English servant whom she saw—a housemaid, a pert, bold-faced young woman—to attract her attention. Leila began to suspect at last that it was not always chance that led them to meet in the passages.

To her great relief Mr. Hesketh Anson never came near the school-room, though Dolores was often with him in the other part of the house.

She had, however, little time to waste on the mere personal considerations of her life at Moorlands. As the days went by she found Dolores an absorbing influence. It was no easy task which she, in her youth and inexperience, had undertaken.

Dolores reigned almost absolute mistress over her parents and every servant in the house. Every whim and caprice which it was possible to gratify was indulged.

Her moods and her tempers were exactly what might have been expected under such circumstances.

So far, Leila had only seen them vented on others; the child not having yet tired of her new companion.

She seemed to have a certain amount of respect for her uncle, founded partly on fear. He had a terrible temper, she told Leila, giving an account of an incident which proved it. It was not always easy to check these domestic confidences, though Leila, whom they made uncomfortable, did her best to silence them. Dolores, in her

happiest and therefore most sociable moods, would rattle on, letting escape little details of the life at Moorlands which Leila would have preferred not to hear. It was no business of hers that no visitors ever called there, nor that Mrs. Anson, though she always dressed as if she were going to see a great many people, never went out to a ball or a dinner-party; nor that Mr. Hesketh Anson made every one in the house do as he liked. But she found that to manage the spoiled, passionate child, infinite tact and patience were needed. She began to dread equally her attacks of violent temper or fits of sullen depression.

It was in one of these talks, which, after all, were but the inconsequent chatter of a child, happy in the companionship she was enjoying, that Dolores told Leila how dreadful her uncle could be when he was angry. There was a black boy attached to the establishment, rejoicing in the name of Hezekiah. He was apparently an endless source of anxiety and disturbance in the household; his pranks, his freaks, his impudence, continually exciting amused tolerance, or calling down on him the indignant protest of the sufferers.

Hezekiah one day had made Hesketh Anson very angry.

"Uncle Hex nearly beat him to death." Dolores shivered nervously. "He looked dreadful—Hezekiah did. I met him as he came screaming along the long corridor, Uncle Hex running after him with a horse-whip. Hezekiah's face was covered with blood, and one arm was broken, and just as he got to me he dropped down on the floor as if he were dead. I don't know what happened after that, for I felt so funny, and Martha came and carried me away to my room, and I didn't seem to remember any more till I found papa holding me, and mamma giving me something to drink. Hezekiah was very bad for a long time after that, and that's why Uncle Hex can't bear Dr. Burton. I like him—he was so nice and kind. But our doctor was ill, and couldn't come, so they had to get Dr. Burton, who lives near here, to come and see Hezekiah; and he always spoke to me whenever he saw me, and one afternoon—I don't know how he found his way—he came right in here, and was talking to me, when Uncle Hex came in, and flew into another rage, and ordered him out of the house. He said it was just like Dr. Burton's confounded impudence——"

"Dolores!"

"Well, that's what Uncle Hex said. Dr.

Burton got as white as your collar—how is it you always look so nice, Miss Mallet?—but he didn't say anything. He has never come here since. But he always smiles and nods to me when I meet him out of doors, and if I am with my governess, speaks to me; but he scarcely takes any notice of me if I am with mother or father, or Uncle Hex. Nobody does, though some of the ladies smile at me when I am not with them. I wonder why people don't like father and mother? I believe," mysteriously, "that Uncle Hex doesn't really——"

"I am afraid you are boring Miss Mallet with these family confidences," said a voice behind them.

They both turned hastily. They were in the bowling alley, which opened off the billiard-room downstairs, and was a favourite place of Dolores' in bad weather. They were resting after a vigorous game of ball, which Leila had enjoyed as much as her pupil. Hesketh Anson had entered, unperceived by them. How much of the conversation he had heard, Leila did not know. But the fancied sneer in his voice filled her with shame and vexation. He would naturally suppose that she was listening willingly to this family gossip.

But before she could speak, he had pulled out a box of sweets and handed it to Dolores, who eagerly tore off the covers.

"Oh, Miss Mallet, they are the sweets you liked so much the other day!" handing it to Leila.

Leila declined to take one.

"They are not poisoned, I assure you, Miss Mallet!"

Leila looked up hastily, to find Hesketh Anson's eyes resting with a strange half-amused searching on her face.

"How stupid you are, Uncle Hex!" exclaimed Dolores, helping herself liberally. "As if Miss Mallet thought they were!"

"I don't know," he said, in an odd tone.

The colour flamed into Leila's face. "I am not afraid," she said distinctly, speaking from a sudden impulse, her dislike to him for the moment conquering her shyness. "Dolores," turning away from him, "put back those sweets, dear. You must not eat any more to-day. Give me the box to take care of for you," holding out her hand.

The presence of any member of her family always had an unfortunate effect on Dolores.

"Indeed I shan't!" she exclaimed, with impudent flippancy. "Uncle Hex gave them to me, and I'll keep them myself."

It was the first time she had been actually rude to Leila, though already during the past day or two, as she began to grow accustomed to her new governess, she had shown incipient attempts at temper and rebelliousness.

This was the first open act of insolence and defiance. Leila, dismayed by the suddenness of the affront yet felt instinctively that it must not be allowed to pass. In an instant the slight incident became a battle of will between herself and her pupil.

"Give it to me," she said quietly, forgetting entirely the young man, the consciousness of whose presence had, a second before, added a sense of humiliation to the real hurt the child's rudeness had inflicted.

The young man himself stood watching the scene with a queer earnestness.

"I shan't! So there! No one has ever made me do a thing I haven't wanted to do before! The other old things wouldn't have dared!" And the child, with audacious impudence, flourished the box over her head, executing some fantastically graceful steps in the direction of her uncle.

But she had not calculated on the youth and liveness that lay beneath the generally rather sedate movements of her new governess, nor on a certain other quality, disguised by the pale quiet of the girl's face.

With a flash, light and steady as a bird on the wing, Leila swept down on the child, and the box was taken out of her hand.

The young, pale-faced governess, rather paler than usual, stepped back the victor.

For an instant Dolores, literally petrified at her audacity, stared speechlessly at her.

The next, she flung herself, like some maddened wild thing, on Leila, beating at her with her fists. In the frantic onslaught she succeeded in getting hold of the arm that held the box, and before Hesketh Anson, who sprang forward, could reach her, the child's even, pearly teeth had met in the girl's arm. A stifled cry broke from Leila, but she held the box firmer, and an instant later, screaming and kicking, Dolores was in the grip of her uncle.

"You wicked little girl! See what you have done!" pointing at Leila's arm.

"I hate her!" cried Dolores, vainly trying to free herself.

"Please let her go," said Leila rather unsteadily, but with no hesitation.

For a second he hesitated, glancing doubtfully from the raging child to the young governess. Then he released his hold.

"She is ashamed of herself already," said Leila, her sweet voice still a little strained, but growing steadier with the cold contempt in it. "As much ashamed as I am for her. Go back to the school-room, Dolores. You will have your tea there, and then go to bed."

Dolores had persuaded her mother to allow her to dine downstairs that evening. Once the treat had been an almost constant one. Of late it had only been granted her on special occasions. To-night was her father's birthday, and she had been looking forward to it for the last two days. Leila was also to be included in the party. For the first time she was to meet the family all together.

"You daren't," said Dolores. But there was a half-hearted note in the fierceness, and something almost like fright in her eyes. "Mother won't let you."

Leila thought it was probable. But with a flash of decision she determined that if her own orders in this matter were set aside she would, at all cost to herself, leave the house. The young man seemed to divine the thought, for something rather like triumph lighted his eyes.

"Leave the room at once," said Leila coldly.

Once again the child, with dangerous eyes, made a savage movement towards her. But there was no need of her uncle to step between them. For a second Dolores met the cold, steady gaze of her mistress, then her eyes dropped, and bursting into heart-breaking sobs, she turned and walked slowly away down the length of the room.

Leila's lips quivered as she stood watching her.

"I am afraid you will not have an easy time," exclaimed Hesketh Anson; "she has the devil of a temper. It is disgraceful!"

"It is not all her fault!" exclaimed Leila, her voice vibrating with a sudden passion which she could not control against the injustice of laying all the blame on the child. Whose fault was it, after all, but theirs?

"I am afraid she has been rather

spolt," he said carelessly. "I suppose you mean to carry out your scheme of remedying our mistakes!"

Was he jeering at her?

"Certainly," she said, looking him straight in the eyes.

For a second, something like genuine sympathy and pity softened his face as he saw her standing alone in opposition to the powers that were.

"Miss Mallet!" he exclaimed quickly, "take my advice and get out of this as soon as you can. It isn't the right sort of place for you. You won't be happy here; you had far better go!" with ill-suppressed eagerness.

The suspicion that had haunted her ever since she came, that for some reason of his own her presence there was distasteful, and that he would be only too glad to get her out of the house, was suddenly confirmed.

"I have no wish to leave," she said, as quietly as she could, with the indignation and dislike rising hot within her.

As she turned away she caught a smothered sound which had a remarkable resemblance to that expression of his which Dolores had just quoted.

Her eyes brightened with scorn, and any personal sense of dislike and anger was

swept away in pure pity for the poor little girl who had been so cruelly wronged in her home training, and brought up in the society of such a wicked young man.

Dolores went to bed after tea. There was no interference from Mrs. Anson, much, it must be confessed, to Leila's relief. A reaction was setting in as a natural consequence, and her courage almost failed her at the last at the thought of entering into the field against Mrs. Anson.

She did not go down to dinner herself; Mrs. Anson did not send for her. She was very glad. Her life of seclusion at home had increased her natural tendency to shyness to an almost painful extent. She had quite dreaded that family dinner-party; but all the same she spent a lonely and unhappy evening in the remote school-room wing. She missed Martha with her fussy kindness, who every night would still look in to see that she had all she needed. But Martha, though she did not venture to speak out, hotly resented her treatment of her darling, and spent all the evening in an adjoining room to that occupied by Dolores, going in and out of the child's chamber to pet and console her, until Dolores suddenly turned on her, and ordered her to keep out of the room altogether.

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. E. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hopsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XVI. FOR AULD LANG SYNE.

WAS it sleep or stupor? The man's eyes were half-closed; the breath came short and jerky, with every now and then a low, gurgling sound; the hands were stretched out upon the blue hospital coverlet; the long, shapely limbs lay inert and helpless; but the dark head was no longer tossed from side to side upon the pillow, and on the pale lips lay the shadow of a smile.

A silver-grey patch of moonlit sky showed through the uncurtained window of the ward, the gas-jet was turned down low. There had been the faint ring of spurs along the flagged corridor, and now the Colonel, in scarlet mess-jacket and forage-cap, stood beside the bed. The orderly in attendance had the gas up in a trice, saluted, and passed out as the Hospital Sergeant passed in.

The Colonel looked down on the pitiful, prostrate figure, gave a sort of cough to be sure his voice was steady, and put the Sergeant to the question sharply—he always spoke sharply, though in reality as tender-hearted as a chicken where his men were concerned.

"Is there any chance for him, eh, Sergeant?"

The Scotchman passed his hand slowly over his moustache, lest a corner of his mouth should be seen to twitch.

"He's in a kind of a sleep, sir, now—a kind of a daze, as you may say—and it's

hard to say how he'll come out of it. Everything on this airth that can be done for him has been done."

"Of course, of course. But it's a bad business—a bad business."

"Yes, sir."

The Sergeant had been led into making one—for him—long speech; he wished for some repose before embarking on another, which loomed ahead and seemed unavoidable.

He was quite used to seeing the Colonel in his wards, for never a man of the Hundred and Ninety-Third lay a-dying but what the lank, wiry figure of the Chief appeared, sooner or later, at his bedside, asking questions in a sharp, short, parade voice, which everybody understood to be the outer manifestation of the truest and tenderest concern. It was told, indeed, how one man, delirious, as was supposed, catching sight—through what mists of gathering darkness who may say!—of his commanding officer standing there straight and tall, lifted his hand promptly in the old salute, and, in the very act, died; an end that had in it surely something soldierly and heroic!

But Sergeant Smith's case was no ordinary one, and if such things as nerves existed at all in the Hospital Sergeant's body, it may be supposed they had been a bit tried. At all events, his composure was not so absolute as usual, and he watched the Colonel's face with ill-concealed anxiety.

"When was Dr. Musters here last?" said the Colonel, who had apparently forgotten that the big gong in the barrack square had gone the hour for mess.

"Well, sir, he's been here off and on, as you may say, all day—and all night too, for the matter of that—but he was across



with Mrs. Muster, and Major Henneker, and Miss Drew, sir, an hour or better ago."

"Ah! just so."

It did not strike the Colonel that there was anything especially remarkable in the last-named lady coming to the hospital with Mrs. Musters and the Major. Miss Drew was a sort of person who stood by herself, and whose actions were not to be questioned as those of others. Of course she would come there, or anywhere else, if she thought she could do any good. In her, a perfect absence of self-consciousness bestowed an absolute freedom. If you thought of her, it was as you thought of a Sister of Charity in war time. She was a most useful person in a regiment, and a woman who never gossiped; a fact that, in the Colonel's mind, entitled her to be crowned a queen among her sex.

"Did he recognise any one at that time?"

"Yes, sir—and Miss Drew, she sang a hymn. It was beautiful—it really was, sir."

The Sergeant actually coloured up in his unwonted enthusiasm, and again passed his hand over his moustache.

"You think it soothed him, eh?"

"He went off, sir, just as you see him now—with a smile on him, and he'd been that restless before, that Orderly Simmons—one of the best men we have, you know, sir—was at his wit's end."

There is some reason to suppose the Sergeant was cracking a solemn kind of joke with himself, that his stolid mind was admitting a faint ray of humour, in the thought of all the strange things he knew, and all the strange things he could tell, and he would—but not even to the wife of his bosom had he revealed the marvellous strange doings of that afternoon. He had pondered over them heavily, it is true, and came to the conclusion that more would be heard of them; came also to the conclusion that such wonderful and disturbing developments had never come across the even tenor of his way before. His wonder what the Colonel would think if he knew all, gave an anxious wisdom to his keen eye as he watched that august personage's face, bending over the unconscious figure on the bed. His notions of what was proper were utterly disorganised, like a company of raw recruits running this way and that; and yet there was a compelling sweetness about it all—a noble constraining personality about Alison, and all she said and did—that gave him a feeling as if he had been in kirk, and heard words of solemnity and beauty.

And now the Sergeant was going to take a rather hazardous step, but one that he thought right and needful. There were things that he felt, if they had to be done, were best done quickly. There was a grey look over the face upon the pillow that accentuated this idea in his mind.

He cleared his throat, passed his hand over his moustache, and from the breast-pocket of his tunic brought out a thin, folded slip of paper. Then, with a slight jerk of his thumb, he indicated the injured man.

"He told me to give you that, sir, when the worst came to the worst; and it seems to me the worst isn't far off. He said I was to say, would you please write, sir, and tell his father—that's his father, in there—and say, would he come and take a last look at his son, and forgive him for all the trouble he'd caused him?"

If the Scotch Sergeant's character for taciturnity was in danger after so long a speech, surely so was his character for implacable serenity under all circumstances, however trying, for sure it is that his voice faltered lamentably, and at last broke altogether. Even in that moment of emotion he gave a glance round to be sure that Orderly Simmons was out of ear-shot, for he was one with Sergeant Bagnet in a conviction that discipline must be maintained, and hospital authorities looked upon as beings of a superior and impassive race.

"The old story—the old story," said the Colonel, not without a certain grim satisfaction either, for he loved to think that the ranks offered not only an asylum but also a place of reformation to men who had got into trouble, as the phrase goes. Then he opened the paper, evidently awkwardly twisted together by faltering fingers, and as evidently held as sacred as the biggest seal could have made it by the man to whom it had been confided. He stepped under the gas-jet, turned it with an impatient gesture, and it flared upwards with a rush, sending a flood of light on to the writing on the paper—writing weak and unsteady, as if traced by a trembling hand, yet decipherable enough:

The Honble. and Rev. Hugh Claverdon,  
The Rectory,  
Forestleigh,  
Devon.

The bare, whitewashed walls; the flaring gas-jet; the pale, extended figure on the bed; the stolid Sergeant, always more or less at 'tention when in the presence

of his commanding officer, and now staring glassily out of window, lest he should be supposed to have the faintest curiosity as to the contents of that scrap of paper—all these things faded from the Colonel's view. He was in Meads at Winchester, and far and near rose and filled the air the sweet, sad strains of

Domum ! Domum ! Dulce Domum !

that swan-song of a homeless boy, that has rung through all the passing of the years.

The Colonel is, in imagination, a boy again, and it is his last night at school. By his side stands his friend, Claverdon ; he, too, is about to leave the dear Alma Mater, and go forth into the world. As the sweet song of songs rises and falls, the hearts of the two youngsters are big within them ; their eyes are not innocent of tears. They link their arms one in the other, and so pass up and down Meads, those pleasant pastures lying all golden in the sunset. The Colonel comes back with a start to the present ; crumples the paper into the side pocket of his mess-jacket, and bends above the bed.

Heavens ! how like are the square, deep brow, the fine dark points of the hair over the temples, the smile that still lingers on the unconscious man's lips !

He passes his hand across his eyes. They had drifted apart, he and Hugh Claverdon ; but what man ever forgets his school friend—his "socius"—the one with whom all joys and sorrows, daring deeds, and boyish scrapes and troubles are shared !

The Sergeant stands like an image carved in wood. The figure-head of a ship has as much expression in its face as he ; and yet he is conscious that the Colonel is strangely stirred.

Presently the Colonel spoke in his usual prompt fashion :

"Send an orderly over to the mess-room, and let Captain Lindsay know that I shall not dine to-night."

"What's up ?" said Ellerton—who had been swearing at having to wait for the Chief so long—as the message was sent in. But as no one knew what was "up," no one could enlighten him. He was not, however, incapable of surmise.

"I saw him go across to see that poor devil, Smith, a while ago."

"Just like the Chief, you know," said Blizard, with a defiant stare.

"Perhaps so," replied the other, "but it's no reason he should keep us waiting all night for our dinner."

"Oh, hang the dinner!" said Blizard, and Ensign Green said "Quite so," and focussed the Adjutant with his eyeglass.

Meanwhile, in the ward the other side of the Square, Colour-Sergeant number one company had opened his eyes wide, turned his face a little towards the light, and recognised his Colonel.

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, sir."

The man's voice was so changed, so feeble and husky, and came with such pitiful pantings, that the Colonel shuddered. His heart yearned towards the son of his old school friend.

When "the boy" spoke, how like, how like he was to the stripling who had looked so grand, as he faced the lightning deliveries of the crack Eton bowler without turning a hair ! Mark that the tall, moustached Colour-Sergeant has, in the Colonel's mind, become "the boy," since he knew that his name was Claverdon. But that "sir" hurt like a blow ; the red blood mounted to the Colonel's brow as he heard it. Take it altogether, it seems probable that, sitting on his chestnut charger at Alma amid a hail of bullets, he showed calmer than now, by the side of a man who lay in a hospital cot-bed, in a bare, whitewashed ward, where not a sound was heard save the echo of the sentry's measured footfall in the square below.

"I am very sorry to see you laid low like this," said the Colonel ; then looked round the bare room in a bewildered sort of way that struck the Hospital Sergeant as strange.

These were no fit surroundings for Hugh Claverdon's son—and yet what could he do ? The doctor had said that the one chance for the man's recovery—a slender, very slender chance at best—was absolute quiet. To move him then would be impossible. As to care and nursing, why, all of us who know anything at all of the hospital orderly, know that he is about the best nurse in the world ; strong—being a soldier—gentle as a woman, knowing neither fatigue nor loss of patience in the care of a case.

The Colour-Sergeant could scarcely be better placed than he was already, and, for the time being, silence was perhaps the best policy.

"Every one is very good to me, sir, but—I feel as if things were going very badly with me, and—there is an indulgence I want to ask for."

It was hard to catch each word as it

came pantingly from the pallid lips, but the Colonel stood close to the cot and bent low.

"Ask anything," he said, and really anybody might have thought there was a sob in his voice.

"I want to see—Private Deacon—I shall—die—easier—for having told him that I forgive him—it was a fault—committed in the heat of passion—I—forgive—him—from—my—heart."

A film seemed to gather over the eyes; the hands again moved restlessly upon the coverlet; but the lips still moved.

"She stood there—with the sunlight on her face—I heard her voice—her voice—how sweet it was—the angels sing so in heaven——" and then a smothered, pitiful cry rang through the room:

"Allison! Allison! bid me good-bye—good-bye—good-bye— Oh, my darling!—my darling!"

The Colonel fell back as if he had been struck; the Sergeant, with all his stolid ways, really could not have told you afterwards what he did; and but for Orderly Simmons, goodness knows what would have happened. But that admirable man, with a slight knock by way of tribute to the commanding officer's presence, came in, glass in hand, and, with a swift salute, stated in a most matter-of-fact way that it was "time;" by which pregnant syllable he meant that not even the Colonel of a regiment could be allowed to stand in the way of a sick man taking his cordial at the proper hour.

Noting the tenderness with which the man's head was raised and the glass held to his lips, the cunning of the touch that smoothed the pillow and laid fresh bags of ice upon the labouring chest, the Colonel felt that even Hugh Claverton's son could hardly be in better hands, and, with a pale set look upon his face, turned to leave the ward.

Truly he had learnt some strange things during his short sojourn there.

The click of the spurs died away down the stone stair-way, and the Sergeant and Simmons were left looking at each other.

"Ain't he like a bloomin' cocoa-nut, now," said the latter, who was born and bred a cockney; "all 'ard shell outside, and 'is blessed 'art chock full o' the milk o' human kindness—ain't he jist?"

The Sergeant nodded. Really his exertions in the way of loquacity had been so immense during the last half-hour that the fount of words was dry.

As for Colour-Sergeant number one company, he had fallen again into a sleep, or a stupor, whichever it might be, and little flecks of sweat were beading on his temples.

"See them," said the experienced Simmons, looking down slantwise so as to catch the glister of the drops of moisture, "that's nater, that is, a-doin' of its best to 'elp the doctor; an' just you look at 'is chess, ain't it 'eaving more easy like? I tell you I've better 'opes of 'im to-night than I've 'ad yet, an' they've bin bloomin' little 'elpless kids of 'opes up to now, Sergeant."

The Sergeant bent over the figure, listened to the breathing that seemed steadier and smoother than before, and then nodded and smiled.

Meanwhile, with bent head and slow and thoughtful mien, the Colonel had betaken himself to Major Henneker's.

A long interview took place between the two comrades, for comrades in truth they were in the best acceptation and fullest meaning of the word, and the hunted, haggard misery that had rested on the Major's handsome face for the last hour or two passed, leaving him more like himself again.

Sorrow there might be before them all, but not such a scandal and nine days' wonder as he had feared.

He was at all times a man of few words, but the few that had passed his lips since he came back from that fateful visit to the hospital had been bitter ones. Not one of these, however, had been spoken to Alison. Her sorrow and her suffering had been held sacred; the solitude she had sought had been left inviolate; but the man's heart had bled within him, and his pride had been laid even with the dust.

One needs to know well one's soldier-world to realise the full bitterness of the blow under which he had suffered so keenly.

But the marvellous story was told. Clouds of doubt and fear were rolled away; there was much that was sad in Alison's love-story, but nothing incongruous. Telegrams were despatched, letters written, Mrs. Henneker and Elsie confided in, and—the Colonel quite forgot he had had no dinner!

How did Elsie take it?

She cried, "I said he was a Prince in disguise!" and incontinently waltzed round the table, light as a leaf before the wind; the while Verrinder, who of course was of the party, would have liked to cry "bravo!" if the Chief had not been present.

The waltz finished, Elsie had a word to say.

"She won't care—that!" and the white fingers gave a little flip. "She cared for him just as he was!"

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Henneker, in her quiet voice and with tears in her eyes, "it is poor dear Mary over again. She would marry Captain Drew, and even when it turned out so badly, would never say she was sorry!"

"Still, that was a noble wilfulness," said the Colonel.

He was easily led to talk of the dear socius of the old school days; of a holiday spent with Lord Thurwold, the boy's father; of an accident at sports when Claverdon was hurt, and lay unconscious for a while, "with just such a look upon his boyish face as you may see upon that poor fellow's across there," added the Colonel; "the same growth of the hair upon the temples, the same line of the brow. Many a time have I been puzzled by something familiar to me in the Sergeant's face, and even his voice—and now I know what it was. Well, well, I shall see my old friend soon again. Heaven grant I may be able to meet him with words of hope and cheer. I should shrink from having to tell him—poor Claverdon!—that he had come too late. It is the old story, I doubt not—debts and difficulties, family estrangement—and then a man down on his luck, seeking to re-instate himself through the ranks. There's nothing like it—take the shilling, stick to your duty, show yourself a smart soldier, and there you are, you know."

The Chief was riding his hobby, and the rest listened in respectful attention, though Verrinder's solemnity was a trifle overdone, and after one glance at his face, Elsie dared not lift her eyes again.

They talked, as people will talk when some heavy, crushing anxiety is weighing upon them, eagerly, as a relief to thought, for the time was nearing when Dr. Musters had promised to come across from the hospital, and bring what news he could. No one, perhaps, was sorry when a white bird seemed to alight just opposite the Colonel, and flinging her golden hair out of her saucy eyes, look up at him with deepest admiration.

"Well, young lady," said the Colonel, and she, not one whit abashed, replied with a deep sigh:

"Things be very sad, sir, since they shot my off'cer Sergeant, an' I'm very

sad my own little self, too, for nobody won't be 'mused at all nicely; an' Alison's so sad, she's tiresome, an' apertly don't care for nothing. P'raps bimeby they'll be more 'museable, all of them."

"Let us hope so," said the Colonel, smoothing away a smile. "It's a long lane, little lady, that has no turning."

"Good Eliza is sad, too," said Missy, "because Mr. Drummer is fear—fully upset 'bout——"

"Missy," cried Elsie at this juncture, "don't worry the Colonel."

"Am I worrying you?" said the child, with a divine air of appeal; and then, catching a smile lurking under the big, tawny moustache, little Missy, with drooping eyes, engaging simper, and head on one side, made a suggestion: "Mr. Colonel, I want to be taken on your knee."

It would have been thought that Missy's family had long since got accustomed to her eccentricities; but this was an amount of audacity really beyond parallel, the Chief being known to be a reserved and by no means child-loving man; but in a moment she was "taken," her white dress and golden locks showing splendidly against the scarlet of the mess dress, and her demeanour that of a queen newly enthroned.

"He doesn't mind, you see—not one bit!" she cried gleefully to Elsie and Verrinder, in indiscreetly candid reply to their looks of disapproval. Then, with condescending politeness, she turned to her new-made friend: "Would you like me to tell you 'bout little Abednego? He's just the dearest wee beastie——"

No doubt the conversation between these two strangely-assorted ones might have continued in flowing form, but at the sound of a step on the stairs all were on the alert, and, alas! Missy dethroned.

All waited in silence for the doctor to speak; but even before he uttered a word, the light in his kindly eyes spoke for him.

"I've some little hopes of him now, Colonel—his pulse is better, and he breathes more easily. If he pulls through, it 'ull be the most remarkable recovery on the face of the airth."

"I'm off for a grilled bone and a brandy-and-soda," said the Colonel; then, as a parting word, he added: "His father will be here shortly—he's one of my oldest friends—Rector of Forestleigh, in Devonshire. I won't say do your best for the poor fellow, Musters, for you'd do that for the last joined recruit, I know; but it

will be a load off my heart when you tell me he is through the wood. Good night!"

The ring of the spurs died away; the doctor sat down, took out his handkerchief, and wiped his brow.

"So that's it, is it?" he said at last.

"And does Miss Alison know?"

"Not yet," they said, all in a breath.

"Well, I must go and tell Amelia. She's in an awful state, is Amelia."

And the doctor hurried off, after various particulars of the wonderful story had been duly imparted to him.

Elsie looked grave; so grave that Verrinder hurried to her side and took her hand.

"Mother, may I go up to Alison? May I tell her?"

Mrs. Henneker, who was crying quietly to herself over the really overpowering events in the midst of which she found herself, said a muffled "Yes, dear," and Major Henneker echoed the permission in calmer fashion.

"I think you are quite the best person to do so, Elsie dear," he said quietly; and Elsie went.

Nothing helps us so well to endure suffering as solitude. It is the great healer. It is like a mother's gentle hand upon an aching brow. It cannot drive the pain away, but it soothes it.

Alone, then, Alison had elected to bear her burden of sorrow. No eager questionings had probed the wound in her heart; in her misery she was held sacred to those about her. If they asked questions as to how this marvellous strange thing had come about, it was of each other. They knew it to be now inevitable; a thing that had to be faced; a thing subversive of all their traditions and ideas, a thing intolerable, and yet that had to be tolerated.

Naturally these feelings of deep dismay were now modified. The gulf was bridged over; they felt that Alison's instincts had been true; there was a rift in the cloud of their discontent.

"It is I, Elsie; will you let me in?" said that now excited and indeed tearful maiden, knocking at the closed door.

The key turned in the lock; Alison stood on the threshold.

Such an Alison! Looking, as Elsie said to Verrinder afterwards, as if she had gone half-way to heaven, and come back again.

Her eyes were homes of silent prayer.

She had been wrestling with heaven for

the life of the man she loved, as Jacob wrestled with the angel; and now the pale dawn of hope was come.

Elsie had meant to tell her tale so quietly—to be so calm, so self-possessed, so deliberate—and what she did do was to throw herself into Alison's arms, and sob out over and over again the words: "Oh, Alison, my darling; he may live—they say there is a chance for him . . ."

To tell the truth, after that gasping, wonderful, and glorious possibility, the rest of the tale fell somewhat flat. It exasperated Elsie to feel that this was so; but the fact was too glaring to be denied.

"Some day you may be Lady Thurwold," said she, shaking her cousin gently to and fro. "Alison, do you hear? Some day you may be Lady Thurwold."

"May I?"

The sweet, grave eyes, in whose depths shone a new and yearning hope, looked into Elsie's, past and beyond—very far beyond—the possible fact of such distinction as the girl spoke of.

The soul that has been closely communing with heaven finds it hard to drop to earth.

"Alison," cried Elsie, "I don't believe you care! I believe you would just as soon have found yourself with a mother-in-law who dropped her ha."

"I think I could have managed the ha, if she had loved him a great deal," said Alison, with a faint, sweet smile.

## SHORT CHANGE.

TAKEN in the abstract, Justice must always occupy a leading place in the list of Christian virtues; indeed, when one considers how gigantic and crushing an evil its negation is, one is disposed to wonder why it has never made a fourth with our old friends Faith, Hope, and Charity. Yet I never look at the allegorical presentment of Justice, with the bandage over her eyes, without a suspicion that the original designer thereof was in his way a man of humour, and drew that friendly veil quite as much for the purpose of shielding from the eyes of the genius the many crimes that are daily committed in her name, as to keep from her the knowledge of facts which might sway her to give a decision on any ground save that of the most rigid abstract right.

If we were to find ourselves translated suddenly into a world in which exact

justice ruled supreme; where every man was absolutely sure of getting his rights to the limits of a hair, and at the same time impotent to impose on his neighbour for the value of a grain of sand, we should probably find the change as marked as if we were living in one of Mr. Gilbert's topsy-turvy worlds. For some reason or other man cannot stand absolute justice; she is too awfully perfect for his faulty, wobbling nature. He admires her in theory, writes books and makes speeches in her praise, and puts up her image in the temples which are supposed to be sacred to her; but she is too much of the marble maiden to compel the love of a creature of flesh and blood. Even to retain his toleration she has had to allow her fair proportions to be dimmed, and her symmetry to be disarranged; a fact which any one who cares may verify by comparing Justice with a big J, with the code which rules the every-day dealings of man with man.

There is no need to trot out the stock examples of this tendency, those well vituperated crimes which that hoary old sinner Society has wrought since men began to live together in fellowship. Over these men grow severely controversial, and there is a large class of readers which determines, and not unwisely, that it will have nothing to say to controversial articles; so let us take some well-known example from the common round to show how Justice sometimes halts, such as the amount of change we get every time we melt down a sovereign, not into half-crowns and shillings, but into some covenanted equivalent of goods, or accommodation, or service rendered. Let us consider the rate which is usually current in these negotiations, and the fate which waits for those who stickle for the uttermost farthing.

The man who hates being done, who doesn't care whether it's sixpence or twenty pounds, but resolves to take up the cudgels for the principle of the thing, is born with a fatal heritage. In another and a better universe, where political economy is an exact science, and where two and two always make four, he might manage to rub along; but in this helter-skelter, loosely-put-together world he will be conscious of a thorn in every cushion. He is a sincere lover of justice. He has not the slightest wish to encroach by a hair's breadth on any other man's rights, but he wants full and free enjoyment of his own. He is a man of blameless life and rigid probity, and yet

the first time that he shall make his protest and claim his full change, atung to madness by something which he considers a flagrant invasion of his rights, the odds are ten to one that he will find himself worsted all round; derided by his foes; and, what is ten times harder to bear, the object of amused contempt of those whose battle he has been fighting as well as his own. Mean-spirited fellows these, without the backbone to stand up for their rights, and willing to abjure them should the trouble of defending them call for the lightest exertion on their part.

I took a jaunt not long ago in the northern parts of this island, and I can safely say that the man who goes thither with the notion of getting his change in full has his work cut out for him. This region is known colloquially as the Land of Cakes; and, apropos of cakes, one may affirm that, within its bounds, the proverb that no one can eat his cake and have it, comes doubly true. I knew that country of old, and when I counted my sovereigns before starting, I determined to be satisfied with a modest equivalent of change—say seventeen and sixpence—for each. During my travels I met several people who were more exacting adherents to the theory of absolute justice for all, and the fate that overtook them in their crusade did not in the least encourage me to follow in their train.

The first instance I can call to mind is that of Mr. Carter. I made his acquaintance on the top of a Highland coach which I met at a lonely inn at the junction of two roads. There was only room for one passenger more when I climbed up, and this vacant seat happened to be beside Mr. Carter. As I settled myself he kept a jealous eye on me to see that I did not occupy one inch more of space than was my due, and proclaimed in a loud voice his opinion that four on a seat meant one too many. Alas, poor Carter! what a lesson was in store for thee, and with what bitter discipline wert thou to be instructed as to the carrying capacities of a Sutherlandshire coach!

We had shaken comfortably into our places, the weather was fine, the country through which we passed was lovely beyond words, and everybody was saying what a charming episode of travel a coach drive was, when suddenly the driver pulled up sharp and addressed some words in Gaelic to an old woman who was seated on the stone fence, with a large and not very

clean-looking bundle in her lap. The result of the colloquy was that the old woman, bundle and all, joined our party, and as ill-luck would have it, she scrambled, apparently by the driver's directions, into the division of the coach where Mr. Carter and I were sitting.

In a moment Mr. Carter's good humour vanished, and his brow grew black as thunder.

"What do you mean by this, driver?" he began. "There are four people on each side—the full number. If you don't put this old woman down at once I shall lodge a complaint against you. It is scandalous—most scandalous."

"Ye'll just sit there," said the driver in English, motioning with his whip to the narrow space between Mr. Carter and the outside rail, and completely ignoring that gentleman and his protest.

"But, driver, I insist——"

Here the objector's speech was cut short by the sudden onward movement of the coach, which consigned the old woman and her dirty bundle on to Mr. Carter's knees, while her hob-nailed boots played havoc with his corns. He raved and protested, but there he had to sit, more or less overwhelmed, for the best part of an hour. Then the coach stopped to change horses; and Mr. Carter, red-hot within and white without with rage, got down to lay before the landlord the story of his wrongs and to demand redress. But the landlord shook his head, and declared that he had nothing to do with the coach or with the number of people it might be made to carry. This speech may have been in the main true, but it could scarcely have been called the whole truth, seeing that the coach, as I afterwards found out, was horsed by his brother and driven by his nephew. Anyhow, he had no comfortable words for Mr. Carter, and when that gentleman, somewhat pacified by the departure of the bundle-bearing old woman, went to resume his seat, he found it occupied by two gigantic drovers. Then followed another scene of rage and protestation. The landlord stood impassive, and the driver, graciously breaking off a conversation with the new intruders, told him he must find a place amongst the luggage behind; people rode where they could on that coach.

Mr. Carter did not respond to this invitation. We left him standing in the middle of the road, and I learned afterwards, from a letter he wrote to the

"Sootsman," that he hired a carriage on to his destination, and sent the bill for the same to the coaching company. I wonder whether he has been recouped the outlay. After we parted with him, the driver and the two drovers talked and laughed boisterously together in Gaelic, and I am almost sure that poor Carter and his misadventures formed the subject of their discourse. This was an ill-starred day's travel for him, I greatly fear. Better had he been satisfied with short change for his sovereign in the matter of sitting space on that coach, than undertake the perilous contest he adventured.

Another example I may bring forward in the person of Mr. Blackstone, whom I met at the popular "Glenahinnock Hotel." He was a man who made himself agreeable all round. He knew all the nicest walks about the place; and, though he did not fish himself, he was full of information as to the right fly to use in order to entrap the trout which were said to exist in the loch near, the "fine trout and salmon-fishing" of the hotel advertisement. It was not until the close of our midday meal on Sunday that I noticed any sign in him of sinister humour. Miss Worts, a fussy, talkative spinster, who had already enlivened the place by getting up a "sale of work" for her pet missionary society, announced, just after the pudding came round, that to-day we should be favoured by an afternoon service in the drawing-room. Mr. Blackstone began to glare and fidget as he listened, and when Miss Worts had finished, demanded in a loud voice what a Roman Catholic or a Particular Baptist would do, supposing he might want to write a letter in the drawing-room while the proposed service should be going on. Nobody took his remarks seriously; but, as the sequel showed, he was in deadly earnest. A cursory glance at the guests round the table would scarcely have revealed the parson; but he was there, nevertheless—an over-worked curate who, knowing the ways of Miss Worts and her sisterhood, had left behind him all clerical garb, and put on severely lay attire. But not even this—and it included a red tie and knickerbockers—could throw off the scent a lady with such a keen nose after the clerical as Miss Worts. She was down upon him before he had been an hour in the house, and bullied or cajoled him into compliance. She made a hard fight to get a sermon out of him as well, but here the worm turned,

and Miss Worts had to lengthen out the service by throwing in an extra hymn.

Some minutes before the appointed time, Miss Worts entered the drawing-room to arrange the chairs conveniently for devotion, and there, seated at the writing-table in the midst, was Mr. Blackstone, with an air of uncompromising resolution apparent both in his countenance and in his attitude. Miss Worts coughed mildly; the clergyman, vested in an anomalous-looking black coat, appeared on the scene; and a whispered conference between the two took place, but Mr. Blackstone took no heed. Then some half-a-dozen worshippers, mostly ladies, dropped in and took their places with solemn smirking, and the clergyman passed over to the card-table, which was to do duty as a reading-desk; but Mr. Blackstone, like the lady in the poem, "neither spoke nor moved." The clergyman began the service, but before he had got to the end of the first sentence Mr. Blackstone was seized with some bronchial affection, and coughed as if he were struggling for breath. The attack wore itself out in lengthy clearing of the throat, and when he felt better, Mr. Blackstone began to write with a quill pen, which gave out such a diabolical scratching that it must have been prepared for the express purpose. The clergyman raised his voice, and at once Mr. Blackstone's throat needed clearing. Miss Worts lifted up a quavering treble in the hymn, and the quill pen discoursed shriller scratching than ever. The clergyman, after a brief struggle, recognised the incongruity of the situation, and rattled through the residue of the service as though he had been a college chaplain doing chapel on a winter morning. He consoled himself with a pipe on the hill, but poor Miss Worts retired to her bedroom to weep over the fiasco that had met her effort to make people spend Sunday as it should be spent.

So far Mr. Blackstone may seem to have triumphed in his fight for full change and for equal enjoyment, by persons of every religious denomination, of the public rooms of the hotel; but fate had not yet done with him. Miss Worts, on her journey south, met on board the steamer a lady as severely orthodox as herself, and imparted to her the story of her discomfort and the name of the instrument of evil who had wrought it, and who should this lady be but the sister-in-law of the Rector of the parish where Mr.

Blackstone lived! The story, by the time it had come to the Rector's ears, was considerably adorned, and when it was further handed on, to become the common property of the parish, it conveyed the impression that Mr. Blackstone, in spite of his attending church and even occasionally taking round the collecting bag, was nothing else than a blatant atheist. Seed of this sort, sown and judiciously nurtured in the social life of a country town, does not long lie unfruitful. Mr. Blackstone was soon conscious of the cold shoulder, and, having received a hint as to the reason, he tried to put himself right by attending service twice every Sunday, and by heading the subscription list for giving the Rector a new Turkey carpet for his study; but all he gained by this line of conduct was to acquire the superadded reputation of a hypocrite. The next year he failed to secure his re-election to the Town Council, and so missed the chance of rising to the dignity of Alderman and Mayor. His neighbour and enemy, Thompson, who would not have had the ghost of a chance against him but for these ill-starred rumours, stepped into his shoes, and, as luck would have it, filled the office of Mayor the year when an illustrious personage came down to open the new borough waterworks. He is now Sir Samuel Thompson, and many bitter things has poor Blackstone to say about the brand-new Thompson coat-of-arms.

One might go on quoting instances ad infinitum as to the impolicy of insisting on full change, but it is probable that the two already quoted will suffice to point the moral. This infirmity is as fertile a source of discomfort as the inability or disinclination to shut one's eyes to the laches and misdemeanours of the ministers of our domestic comfort, and it is surely one which ought to be checked without remorse. Ease, after all, is the goal for which most of us are contending, and ease will never be ours if we persist in kicking against the pricks in the interest of abstract justice. Our days of struggle and anticipation are the best we are likely to know on this side of the grave, and it is surely the worst economy to mar them by struggling pedantically after what no one else has ever attained. It takes a lot of greasing to make the wheels of life run smoothly, and, "*experto crede*," the acceptance of short change now and again is a better lubricant than the universal exaction of one's full rights.



## "OCCUPATION—AUTHOR."

## A COMPLETE STORY.

ON the whole I am fairly well satisfied with my banker. He pays me a half-penny per sovereign per month on my balance. I can withdraw all or any part of that balance at any time and almost anywhere. I can keep my account open by leaving in his hands the merely nominal sum of one shilling, and, even if poverty compels me to spend that shilling, he will re-enter my name on his books as soon as I get another. In spite of the liberality of his dealings he is not likely to suspend payment, because his name is John Bull, and he does business at the sign of the post-office. I have, however, one fault to find with him.

He is always wanting to know what I am. Not content with making me state my occupation when I go to him with that other shilling, he has to be reminded of it every time I draw upon him. Now, though I can't see that it matters to John Bull whether I am tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, or beggar-man, I shouldn't so much mind telling him if he would keep the information to himself. He is only an abstraction, but his young-lady clerks are personalities—very charming little personalities too, some of them—and when I take my book and my warrant into an office they show a personal interest in me, which, as a bashful man, I find trying.

I must confess that I suffer through my own foolish pride. Until lately, whenever I sent in a notice of withdrawal I filled in the space after "occupation" with the word "none," and as long as I did so I always received my money without feeling conscious that three or four pairs of bright eyes, all full of curiosity, diluted, perhaps, with a little admiration, were intently gazing upon me.

Unfortunately, about two years ago, when I was unduly elated over the acceptance of my first story—by the way, that is not quite accurate; it was not actually my first story, but the first about whose merits any editor agreed with me—I opened a new account and wrote myself down "author."

Then my troubles began. The first time I drew on that account, the pretty girl who compared my warrant with the facsimile from the head office, smiled and pretended she was obliged to ask another girl prettier than herself some question

about it. Then they both stared at me, not exactly rudely, but as if they had never seen an author before, and wanted to discover whether there were any outward signs by which the species might be recognised.

There may be men, possibly even authors, who would have found the situation tolerable, if not pleasant, but I felt as uncomfortable as if the scrutiny to which I was subjected had been the outcome of a suspicion that I had stolen a deposit-book and forged a notice of withdrawal, instead of being, as I believe it was, a proof of the interest taken in literature and the makers thereof by the fair scrutineers.

I might, of course, have saved myself from further annoyance of this kind by withdrawing my balance, taking it to some other office, and reverting to my former style of describing myself.

"But," thought I, "if you will climb the ladder of fame, my boy, you must expect the eyes of the public to be fixed on you. The higher you get the harder they will stare, so you had better learn to deport yourself gracefully under inspection before anybody publishes an illustrated interview with you."

At that time I thought that story would make me famous as soon as it was published—I know better now; I don't think any less of the story, but I found that not even the best work is appreciated as quickly as it ought to be—and so, fearing that I should not be able to get rid of my bashfulness through the medium of the post-office before I became a celebrity, I fled to hide my blushes in the country. I might as well have perched myself on the top of a lamp-post in the Strand.

I chose a very quiet place, too—Colstock, a little port on the Bristol Channel which plays at being a seaside resort during the summer months—but I am now convinced that I defeated my own object by seeking out such a retired spot. My secret would have been safer in Scarborough.

Of course the people in the post-office found out my profession the first time I drew on my account, and—mind, I make no accusations; I don't want to get the ladies who manage that post-office into trouble, because they are widows and fatherless; at least, the old lady is a widow and the girls are fatherless—three days afterwards the Vicar called upon me.

Now I am a bit of a Bohemian, and not used to paying or receiving ceremonious

calls. I pick up my friends casually, often in—well, in places of public resort—and sometimes I don't know their names until I happen to ask the landlord or the bar-maid. There now. I didn't mean to let that out, but never mind. The chief fault of most bits of autobiography is their obvious want of candour, and nobody can now lay that to the charge of this one.

After this confession perhaps I need scarcely add that few of my friends are clergymen, but nevertheless I got on pretty well with the Reverend Thomas Lowrie—so well that at last he asked me to come up and have tea with him the next day.

"And I dare say," said he as he was going away, "that you won't mind giving my little girl your opinion and advice. She dabbles a bit in literature herself."

When I saw the pile of manuscripts she brought out on the lawn for my inspection, I thought she must have swum in it for some years. Such pretty manuscripts they were, too, scented with lavender instead of tobacco, tied up with bits of pink silk ribbon, and written in a beautifully neat hand warranted to set the most respectable compositor swearing at large—only it turned out that as yet no compositor had ever seen that hand.

I almost cried when I discovered that every manuscript had half-a-dozen or more notices of rejection attached to it. One editor presented his compliments to Miss Lowrie, but was sorry that her story was not suited to the requirements of his twopenny-halfpenny—the twopenny-halfpenny is my own—magazine. Another thanked her for giving him the pleasure of perusing that same story, but regretted his inability to make use of it; and a third—he must have been a cynical, sarcastic sort of wretch, that third—led her to believe that unusual pressure on his space alone prevented him from accepting the poor, forlorn little tale.

I was—nay, am—accustomed to receive documents of the same sort myself, but I never treasured them up, or believed that they were meant to convey anything more consoling than an editorial opinion that my story was not up to much. That poor little girl, though, mistook politeness for appreciation.

"What do they say to people whose stories are really bad?" she asked.

"Oh! 'No rubbish can be shot here,' or something equally cutting," I replied with wonderful promptness, considering that until she asked that ingenuous question I

had no notion that she imagined that her stories had been awarded something at least equivalent to "highly commended" at a cattle show.

"It is very tantalising to have so many nearly accepted and never quite to succeed," she went on.

"It must be," said I with a sigh of sympathy. "But perseverance, you know, Miss Lowrie."

"Ah, yes," she said, with a deeper sigh. "But I have persevered so long, Mr. Dumble. Now you are not an editor, are you?"

I pleaded not guilty by shaking my head, smiling, and asking if she thought I looked like one.

"Then," she continued, looking pleadingly into my eyes and returning my smile, "your opinion, if you will be good enough to give it, will be based on the merits of my stories alone, won't it?"

"Certainly," I replied, with Spartan firmness.

"And you'll tell me really, honestly, what you think about them?"

"Really, honestly," I repeated, my voice shaking a little.

I didn't mean it. Spirit of criticism forgive me! I didn't mean it.

Edith Lowrie was one of the prettiest girls I have ever seen, and she used her eyes with all the innocent recklessness of a four-year-old child playing with a box of matches. She thanked me for my fallacious promise, and as she thanked me she "lookt me through and through" with the fire of those eyes, so that such poor sticks of honest resolution as were still standing when I made it went by the board immediately.

Dark brown eyes they were, and they had all that variety of expression which distinguishes the eyes of the natural flirt, but she wasn't a flirt any more than the aforesaid child with the matches is an incendiary. Of course she was quite safe with me. I mean there was no fear that I should misunderstand or take advantage of her simplicity, but as her senior by several years I thought it right to warn her that it might be misunderstood or taken advantage of by men less quick at reading character or less scrupulous than I am.

"Really, Miss Lowrie, you ought to wear coloured glasses," I said one day, when I had had tea at the Vicarage again, and we were sitting out in the garden under a tree.

"Oh, do you think so?" she replied. "I

don't find that writing hurts my eyes at all. They don't look weak, do they?"

She submitted them to my inspection as she spoke. I thought of Mrs. Wadman, contrasted the simple maiden with the designing widow, and nerved myself to feign the insensibility of Uncle Toby.

"Well, no," I replied, feeling that I was blushing, "not exactly weak, but you ought to be careful how you use them. You look at me sometimes as if——"

I came to a dead stop. She was at that moment looking at me as if she might be saying "wouldn't you like to kiss me?" but you can't tell a girl you haven't known much more than a week that her eyes say that—or at least I can't, being, as I have said, a bashful man.

"Well, as if what, Mr. Dumble?" she asked, changing all unwittingly her unspoken words to "Do you mean as if I loved you?"

Now, shy as I am, I flatter myself that if she had been the first she seemed I could have found something to say appropriate to the occasion, but, fearful of offending her, I stammered out:

"Oh! as if your eyes were tired," and then sought safety by fixing my own on the ground at her feet.

"Of beholding you, Mr. Dumble?" she asked, laughing merrily. "Now I call that fishing for a compliment, and as a punishment I condemn you to play another set immediately. If you were not so lazy, you would have learnt to beat me long ago."

She was teaching me to play lawn-tennis, but I am stout and scant of breath, and she was as active as Atalanta. If we had played continuously to this day I could never have beaten her, even if I had tried; and I never did try.

We played our set, which she won by six to love, and then we talked again. A fortnight had elapsed since she gave me her manuscripts to decipher, and that evening she insisted on having my opinion about them. I need not set it down here. In the first place I do not profess to be a critic; and in the second my judgement, as I have hinted, was biased by personal considerations. She seemed pleased with what I said, however, and thanked me so eloquently with those glorious eyes that I went back to my lodgings that night more than half persuaded that I might not unreasonably hope to win her.

Until the small hours I sat up reviewing the situation, and calculating my chances

of success. At first I decided that my personal appearance would be altogether against me, but later on I modified that condemnation of my fleshly—I use the word advisedly—tabernacle. I don't pretend to be handsome, but I am not ugly—not repulsively ugly, anyhow—and as it seems to be the general opinion that, within certain wide limits, a woman's choice is not much influenced by the moulding of her wooer's features, I finally set down personal appearance as a neutral force not to be reckoned on either side.

My bashfulness I thought would tell rather in my favour. Even free-spoken, lively, up-to-date, London sort of girls have told me that they liked me because I never made myself too cheeky; and if such as these could appreciate the modesty of my nature, it was surely safe to assume that quiet, country-bred Miss Lowrie would like it.

Besides, though shy, I am by no means tongue-tied when I have a girl all to myself in a quiet place; and, though incapable of contributing my fair share to a general conversation, I can whisper soft nothings into a particular ear as well as anybody.

Then there was my profession. That was certain to help me with a girl who wrote herself; and I didn't think Mr. Lowrie could possibly object to it, because when he first called on me he said some very complimentary things about Colstock being honoured by my visit, and so on. In the end I decided that personally I had a very fair chance, especially as there didn't seem to be any rivals about.

Financially, I had a hundred and twenty pounds a year in Consols—enough, I thought, for necessities—and, on the strength of that accepted story, I hoped to be able to earn something for luxuries by my pen. There was nothing in the style of the Vicarage household to lead me to believe that Mr. Lowrie was a rich man, and I hoped he would not refuse to allow us to begin married life in lodgings in a Bohemian way.

I didn't think Edith would mind living in a Bohemian way, either. After I had decided that my chance was good enough to be worth trying, I sounded her on the point, and though her ideas of Bohemianism were derived from books, and therefore lacked precision in realistic detail, she seemed to have grasped the spirit of the thing. Anyhow, she was unconventional enough in her relations with me.

She took me for long walks. Yes; I mean that. She literally took me. I hate

walking, and if she had not insisted that I ought to see this, that, or the other pretty spot near—our ideas of nearness differed—Colstock, I should never have wandered farther than the Vicarage. By way of chivalrous revenge I took her on the water. Rowing on the Bristol Channel is not hard work if you time yourself properly—that is, take care to go up-channel on the last of the flood and come down with the ebb. You can, of course, with equal advantage, reverse the process, but at Colstock if you want to go out after half-ebb you must pay men to haul the boat and carry you over about half a mile of mud. This, however, is a digression. We never went out on the ebb. For one thing, it would have been too expensive—those Colstock boatmen put a value on their time, which is positively startling when you consider how much of it they waste in leaning against posts—and for another, the novel spectacle of boatmen working would have attracted all the village; but this is still a digression. Let me resume my tale of woe.

I lived on in my fool's paradise for about a month, fancying that I had made a favourable impression upon Miss Lowrie, and was deepening it as time went on. With the usual unselfish devotion of a lover I strove to please her by changing my habits. I dressed more carefully, smoked much less, ceased to frequent the village inn, and went regularly to church—her father's church. I even read some poetry and crammed up a lot of nonsense about sunsets out of a scenery-novel, so that I might treat her to the kind of talk she loved.

I had long ago discovered that our tastes in conversation differed. She liked to discuss improving subjects seriously, and, as I am accustomed to treat things in general in a spirit of light banter, our views sometimes clashed. It was a clashing of views which at last showed me on what unsubstantial foundations I had built my castle in the air.

We were out boating, and about two miles from land, just drifting quietly up-channel with the tide, when the crash came. We were talking about Modern Dramatic Art and the exponents thereof, and I—perhaps flippantly—suggested that there must be some truth in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, because so many of the said exponents seemed to be nothing but up-to-date embodiments of the spirit of Mr. Vincent Crummies.

She did me the honour to smile, but quickly recovered herself and looked at me reproachfully.

"I wish you wouldn't turn everything into nonsense," she said severely.

"Will you help me to be more serious?" I asked.

"I—I don't quite understand you, Mr. Dumble," she faltered, blushing and looking down into the bottom of the boat.

I don't pretend that my eyes are very expressive, but I think that they must have told her what I meant. Nevertheless, I went on to explain myself clearly in words. She waited till I had finished, and then, as I leant forward to take her hand, she crushed me.

"Oh, Mr. Dumble," she said, "I am so sorry! I thought you knew I was engaged."

She looked sorry—I will say that for her—but why she thought I knew passes my comprehension. I suppose that as everybody in Colstock knows everything about everybody else, she took it for granted that my landlady or somebody had enlightened me. However, I didn't begin to consider that question just then; I was far too much upset by the unpleasantness of the situation to consider anything.

We were, as I have said, about two miles from land; the tide would not turn for another half-hour, and I am an indifferent oarsman. We were clearly doomed to remain in close proximity for some considerable time. Edith was steering; I was rowing. We were therefore face to face with our faces only a few feet apart, and I had just made an utter ass of myself. Nice situation, wasn't it, for a bashful man?

I blushed scarlet, seized the sculls and pulled with all the energy, if not the effect, of a 'Varsity eight rolled into one. I took it for granted that Miss Lowrie would steer for the port, but she never moved the rudder, and, as I didn't like to say anything, we simply went up-channel a little faster than we had been going before.

Presently my breath failed me, and I stopped rowing. Miss Lowrie, who had been steadfastly regarding her pretty boating-shoes ever since the catastrophe, looked up, and her eyes seemed full of trouble, almost of despair.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she asked, so piteously that I could have kicked myself for causing her so much distress.

I told her so in other words; that is, I assured her it was all my fault, and that it was I who ought to plead for forgiveness.

Then she brightened up wonderfully, and after a while I felt more comfortable myself. We weren't exactly merry, of course, it wasn't to be expected; but she was so sympathetic that I was no longer in a hurry to get back before our usual time.

With that childlike simplicity which was her greatest charm, she told me all about him: how he had been her father's curate, but now had a living of his own in the North; what a good fellow he was; how well he played cricket, and so on. I should be sure to like him, she said, and she hoped we might meet some day.

I am sure she meant it all—in fact, I don't believe she ever spoke an insincere word in her life—but all the time there was a sort of wistful regret in her eyes, as if she might have learned to care for me if her young affections had not been prematurely pledged. They were very tantalising, not to say provoking, were those eyes, and, though she knew it not, they tempted me to beg her to throw the other man over and elope with me.

My sense of honour, however, saved me from making an utter fool of myself, and I said but little for the greater part of the way.

"And when is the wedding to be, Miss Lowrie?" I asked, as we approached the landing-place.

"Oh, I—I hardly know yet. Perhaps never," she replied, with a smile, and a blush and a look which made me glad I had not asked such a dangerous question half a mile farther out.

Would you believe that she was nevertheless married within six weeks?

I had fled from Colstock and temptation the next morning, but I saw the announcement in "The Times," and to this day I don't know what to make of it. Paternal pressure must have been applied, I suppose, for I can't persuade myself that Edith really knew she was going to be married so soon when we parted in the Vicarage garden that night. If she did she was a most atrocious little flirt, and I must so totally lack the power of insight into character that I had better not occupy myself with authorship any longer. But then—no, I am certain she was not a flirt.

### OUR COAL INDUSTRIES.

It is literally true that coal is one of the first necessities of civilised life. It is to the industrial organism what bread and

water are to the physical body, while to the physical body in cold and temperate climates its heat-radiating qualities are indispensable. So impossible is it for us as a nation to get along without this invaluable mineral, that it has long been contended by many persons that the coal resources of the country ought to be made and retained as national property. This is a question of political economy, which it is not our province or our purpose to discuss, but it is mentioned here as illustrating the illimitable interest of the subject. The labour troubles in the Midlands and in Scotland, and the so-called "coal famines" of the last two years, have given our coal industries a special prominence and a peculiar interest, and have rendered the time opportune for the focussing of information.

The first thing that strikes one who addresses himself to the study of the coal industry is its great age. Thus what is called the Great Northern Coal-field, which embraces the counties of Durham and Northumberland, and comprises an exposed and concealed area of six hundred and eighty-five square miles, and an area of about one hundred and ten square miles under the German Ocean, has workings at least ten centuries old. There is a record, dated 852, of the receipt of twelve cart-loads of fossil-coal at the Abbey of Peterborough; and this was, assuredly, not the first case of production and delivery.

The Deeds of the Bishopric of Durham contain records of grants of land to colliers as far back as 1180, in various parts of the county. In the year 1239 a charter was granted by Henry the Third to the freemen of Newcastle-on-Tyne to dig coal in the fields belonging to the Castle, and it was in or about this year that coal was first sent to London. Very early in the fourteenth century evidence abounds of a large consumption of coal by smiths, brewers, and others. Already the smoke-nuisance appeared, and a commission of Edward the First levied fines to prevent it. Another charter, or license, was granted to the freemen of Newcastle in Edward the Third's time to work coal within the town walls; and in the year 1367 coal began to be worked at Winlaton, in the neighbourhood where George Stephenson was to evolve the locomotive four hundred years later, while himself a worker at the coal-pits.

According to Herbert's "History of the Livery Companies," coal was certainly used

in the Royal household as far back as 1321. It is mentioned in charters granted by King John, Henry the Third, Edward the First, Edward the Third, and Richard the Second, showing that it had become a regular article of commerce. An encouragement to work coal was doubtless due to our insular position, and the difficulty and expense of importing fuel for the growing population.

A Government tax was laid upon coal in the year 1379, and this is the first mention of any impost. In 1421 a duty of twopence per chaldron had to be paid to the Crown on all coal sold to persons "not franchised in the port of Newcastle." This duty was allowed to fall into arrears; and, as it could not be paid up when called for by Elizabeth, a duty of one shilling per chaldron was imposed. This was the tax which Charles the Second afterwards settled on his natural son, the Duke of Richmond, and which, in 1799, the Government redeemed for an annuity of nineteen thousand pounds, and finally repealed in 1831, after it had been in operation for over four hundred years on the Tyne.

Another duty imposed by Elizabeth was a tax of five shillings per chaldron on coal sent over sea. This tax was increased by James the First to eight shillings and fourpence, with an addition of one shilling and sixpence per chaldron on coals exported in foreign ships. A grant was made to the Corporation of London after the Great Fire, of an impost of one shilling per chaldron—subsequently increased to three shillings—for the rebuilding of the City. Again, in 1670 a tax of two shillings per chaldron was granted by Parliament for the rebuilding of fifty-two parish churches, and in 1677 a special tax of three shillings per chaldron was imposed for the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral. These duties remained in force during Queen Anne's time, and in the eighteenth century the imposts varied considerably. In 1850 the export duties on coal, of three shillings and fourpence per ton in British ships and six shillings and eightpence in foreign ships, were wholly repealed, and since then the remainder of the old imposts have disappeared. In 1831 the taxes on sea-borne coal yielded about eight hundred and thirty thousand pounds, and the export duty about one hundred and fifty thousand pounds per annum.

These facts are mentioned to show how important a function has been discharged by coal in the national finances, and in the up-building of the metropolis.

Surtees, the historian of Durham, dates the beginning of the rise of the great coal-port of Sunderland to the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth. According to Stow's "London," an institution was founded in London in 1430 for "poor impotent priests," who were to receive a certain allowance of bread, drink, and "coal." In 1521 almshouses were built near the Tower, with the condition that the poor should receive every year one load of thirty sacks of "chare coal." In 1562 the Earl of Warwick, as Governor of Newhaven, writes to the Council complaining of short supply of "wood and cole," and later writes expressing surprise that "we hear nothing of the Newcastle coles, for the which we have so often written."

In the *Commonplace Book of Buckle*, the historian, one finds some interesting jottings about the early use of coal. In 1572 to 1578 the price was eightpence a sack; in 1580, tenpence-halfpenny; in 1581, one shilling. Mention is made, in 1553, by the French Ambassador, of "charbon de terre," and "plomb," as two very old exports from England to France. In 1548 it is evident from a reference in the State Papers that the Queen-Dowager Catherine was in the habit of burning coal, and in 1560 the coal-miners at Newcastle were numerous enough to induce Lord Grey to suggest that they should be employed to spring a mine under Leith. A memorial drawn up by Cecil in 1563 contains an article prohibiting the carrying of Newcastle coals to the French.

Pepya's Diary records that in 1666, in consequence of the war, coals were three guineas a chaldron, and that a few months later they rose to four pounds. The earliest mention of the conveyance of coal in wagons along "wagon-ways," the precursor of the railway, is in 1671, at Teamataith, in the county of Durham.

It is curious that the word "blackguard" came into the language just about the time when coals came into domestic use. In the sixteenth century colliers were far from popular, and in great houses the un-liveried menials employed to carry coals to the fires were called "black-guards." Putting two and two together, as it were, the word "blackguard" soon became a term of reproach. The reason why colliers were disliked was that coals were for long popularly supposed by the ignorant masses to be unwholesome. Thus a man who would carry coals was easily judged capable of any indignity. The "knavery of the

colliers" of Newcastle is referred to by Dekker—1607—and contemporary and earlier writers have also sneering or depreciative references.

A note by Buckle, to be used as a prelude to an account of manufactures in the sixteenth century, runs thus: "The two great physical causes of our prosperity are iron and coals, both of which we possess in such quantities that, with even moderate industry and skill, we could hardly fail to be the richest nation in Europe. But with the accession of Elizabeth we were entirely ignorant of the vast sources of power which nature had prepared for us in the bosom of the earth. Coals, indeed, had been burnt for some time, but never used in manufactures. Iron was only smelted by means of wood, but when that threatened to fail, the happy idea occurred of making one power aid another, and smelting iron by burning coal."

The author of the "History of Taxation and Taxes in England"—Mr. Dowell, an official of the Inland Revenue Department—traces a coasting trade in sea-coal to the latter part of the thirteenth century, and mentions the existence of sea-coal dealers at Colchester in 1295, who paid the then tax on moveables in respect of their stocks of coal. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, he says, sea-coal was used in London by "smiths, brewers, dyers, and others," as we have already mentioned, and he adds that the coal ships, or "colliers," discharged their cargoes at Sea-Coal Lane, where it was stored, put into sacks, measured by the quarter, and sold under the inspection of meters appointed by the Mayor.

The increase in domestic use of coal in London, however, was not rapid. The doctors proscribed it, because they considered the smoke unwholesome; Parliament petitioned Edward the First to prohibit this "novel and intolerable nuisance"; and, during the residence of the Queen in London, the use of it was totally suppressed by Royal proclamation, "in case it might prove pernicious to her health." It was in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, according to Dowell, that the use of coal began to grow from the forge into the kitchen and the hall of most towns that lie about the coast; and it was in the time of Charles the First that, notwithstanding its black smoke, sea-coal came into general use in the metropolis.

It is noticeable that although coal began to be heavily taxed after the Restoration,

the trade in it received some exceptional privileges. Thus, an exemption from impressment was granted to the masters of colliers in respect of one man for every fifty tons of the vessel; the collier ships were protected by a special Channel fleet; and nine men-of-war were to cruise constantly on the northern and western coasts for the preservation of the coal vessels.

These coal-carrying vessels, or "colliers," have played a very important part in our national development. For generations they formed the nursery of British seamen, and the "Geordies" of the coal-brigs sailing out of the Tyne and Wear used to be accounted among the nimblest and boldest seamen afloat. There was not, perhaps, much "book-learning" among them, and more of rule-of-thumb than of scientific navigation about the management of their vessels. But it used to be an old saying, which if not strictly true meant a great deal, that an old north-country collier skipper could find his way blindfolded from Tyne to Thames.

A splendid sight, which many living still remember, used to be witnessed at the mouth of the Tyne, after a long spell of easterly winds which had kept the colliers imprisoned in port, when two or three hundred vessels would spread their sails as they passed Tynemouth Point on their way to the ports of the South.

These old collier brigs were by no means so black as they were painted—at least, after they got away from the "staithes," or piers, at which the dusky contents of the pit-waggons were emptied into their yawning holds. They were trim and taut vessels for the most part, staunch and well found, as they needed to be to weather the winds and seas of the tempestuous German Ocean at all seasons of the year.

Rough indeed was the life of these old colliers, and rough the men and rough their fare who both worked the ships and discharged the cargoes; but the merchant service has never seen better seamen. Now, alas! the saucy brigs—the "Mary Anns," and "Two Sisters," and "Brotherly Loves," and "Johns and Marys"—are things of the past, while long, low, narrow, black screw-steamers throb incessantly up and down the coast in their place. Much of the romance of the coal trade has vanished with the old collier-brig—her rough-voiced skipper, and her burly owner, whose pride and joy it was to attend the periodical "club dinners" of the Mutual

Insurance Societies in which the ship-owners of the day used to "cover" their vessels.

The proper household coal used to be "Wallsend," and still is, although the name is now applied to much good house coal which never saw Wallsend. This celebrated name belonged originally and exclusively to the coal produced from the "High Main" seam of the coal-field of the North. The principal colliery at which it was produced was at Wallsend, a village about midway between Newcastle and Tynemouth; but it was also produced at other parts, such as Walker, Heaton, and Willington.

The same coal, or coal quite as good, was produced by many collieries in the county of Durham to the south, but the same trouble was not at first taken there to keep the good coal free from admixture with inferior qualities, and hence the reputation which Tyneside "Wallsend" coal obtained and long enjoyed. By-and-by, however, the Durham coal-owners began to work special seams specially for household purposes, and sent the coal thus selected into the market as "Wallsend." And as the original Tyne Wallsend seam became worked out, these other coals took its place, and "Wallsend" was used as a generic term applied to all Tyne and Durham house coal of the first quality. This, in fact, is the coal which used to be—more generally in the past than now—known in London as "sea-borne" coal, as distinguished from the coal brought in by rail from the Midlands and elsewhere. The great value of the sea-borne, or Wallsend house coal, consists in its great heating power, its steady combustion, and the small proportion of residual ash it leaves.

In the Northern Coal-field the best gas coal is produced from the same seam as the best house coal. Each ton of gas coal should yield, when distilled, not less than ten thousand five hundred cubic feet of gas.

The best steam coal of the Northern Coal-field is called "Hartley," much in the same way as the best house coal is called Wallsend. It came originally from a colliery near the village of Hartley; but as the same seam was discovered and worked elsewhere in Northumberland, the name "Hartley" was applied to Northumbrian steam coal generally. As Northumberland is now the chief producer of steam and some kinds of factory coal, so is Durham now the chief producer of house and gas

coal. Durham and Northumberland together produce more than one-fifth of the entire production of the United Kingdom.

The Yorkshire Coal-field has an area of about eight hundred square miles, if we include the portions which abut into Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Sheffield is at about the centre of this coal-field, and Sheffield, as everybody knows, is the centre of the cutlery trade.

The seams are not as a whole so thick and rich as those of the Great Northern Coal-field, but those of what are known as the "Middle Coal Measures" of Yorkshire are both thick and excellent in the quality of the coal. Among the various qualities yielded by this field may be mentioned "Black Bed," a soft, friable, dull-looking coal, burning to a red ash, used locally for engine and gas purposes, but also sold in places as a second-class house coal; blocking coal, which corresponds with what is known as Silkstone further south; Barnsley, which exceeds in thickness of seam and richness any of the Yorkshire coal except "Silkstone," and is in two qualities, one adapted for steam and the other for house purposes; "Silkstone," a fine bituminous house coal, raised chiefly now for the London market, where it is held in high esteem.

The Cumberland Coal-field, like that of Durham, extends in part under the sea; but it is of comparatively small area. It is said that coal was worked at Whitehaven so long ago as 1660. The principal outlet for Cumberland coal, over and above what is consumed in local ironworks, factories, and so forth, is in Ireland.

The Lancashire Coal-field is irregular in shape and much broken up by "faults," but altogether covers an area of something like two hundred and twenty square miles. Here we meet with an altogether new set of names applied to the different qualities of coal, such as Balcarres, Blackley, Fulledge, Pemberton, and others. Generally speaking, the Lancashire coal burns freely and raises steam rapidly, and is thus excellent for factory and steamer purposes, but it gives off a good deal of smoke during combustion. In Lancashire is what is reputed the deepest pit in England—that of Ashton Moss, the sinkings and borings of which have penetrated to a depth of one thousand and fifty yards. The greater portion of the Lancashire output is consumed either locally or within this country, the exports being comparatively small.

The Cheshire Coal-field adjoins that of



Lancashire, and Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire we have already spoken of in connection with Yorkshire. The next coal-field, therefore, to be noted is that of Warwickshire, which in length is about fifteen or sixteen miles, and in breadth from one to two miles. The coal of this district is suitable both for household and factory purposes, and is distributed by railway and canal for home consumption.

The Shropshire Coal-field is irregular and much broken up, the principal areas being Coalbrookdale, Shrewsbury, Oswestry, and the Forest of Wyre. Most of the coal of this region is used for factory purposes and iron smelting.

The North Staffordshire Coal-field covers an area of about seventy-five square miles, is triangular in form, and rich in its yield. The greater portion of the output is consumed in the local ironworks, potteries, and other works; but a good deal is also sent away by canal and rail to different parts of the country.

The South Staffordshire and Worcestershire Coal-field is the most important in Central England, and, among others, it includes the well-known districts of Cannock Chase, Dudley, Wolverhampton, and Bilston. The production is very large, but probably three-fourths of the output are consumed locally, or within a limited radius of the pits.

The North Wales Coal-field yields both cannel (gas), steam, and house coal, and the South Wales Coal-field is most famous for its steam coal. This field has an area of about one thousand square miles, and while it yields both house and factory coals, its richest yield is in coal suitable for consumption on steamers. It is preferred by the Admiralty to all other steam coals because, while developing heat rapidly, it gives off less smoke than any other coal. The export is enormous, and the growth of Cardiff, the great port of shipment, during the present generation has been phenomenal.

The Gloucestershire Coal-field includes the famous Forest of Dean, which yields a coal peculiarly adapted to the iron industries of the district as well as to household purposes.

The coal-fields of Scotland occupy, geologically speaking, a depression extending from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Forth, including the counties of Ayr, Renfrew, Lanark, East and Mid-Lothian, Stirling, Clackmannan, and Fife. In length this coal-field is about one hundred miles,

and in average breadth about twenty-five miles, but it is not continuously productive. Still, it is the largest in Great Britain, although the output does not nearly equal that of the largest English coal-fields. Scotland produces both cannel coal—for gas purposes—and house, steam, and factory coals. The names of the various sorts are peculiar to Scotland, such as Eil, Mats, Splint, and Parrot. Large quantities are exported from the ports on both east and west coasts, and during the English strikes large quantities of Scotch coal were sent by railway and sea to various parts of England—even by rail as far as London itself.

Ireland has not much coal. In the north there is coal about Antrim in Ulster, and about Leitrim in Connaught; and in the south, there is coal in the counties of Clane, Limerick, and Cork, as well as in Queen's County and Tipperary. The total production, however, is very trifling, and Ireland practically obtains all her coal for all purposes from England and Scotland.

We have avoided in this rapid survey all statistics referring to output, export, numbers of people employed, costs, wages, and the like, as these are matters hardly adapted to these pages and readily obtainable from official publications. In conclusion, however, we may state that the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the subject reported in 1871 that the quantity of coal then unmined and available for future use was estimated at one hundred and forty-six thousand millions of tons. This is now being mined at the rate of about one hundred and eighty-five millions of tons per annum.

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER VII.

IN the meantime, the family party, as it assembled for dinner in the drawing-room downstairs, was scarcely in a more cheerful mood. The room, a magnificent one, was brilliantly lighted. The Ansons seemed to have a peculiar dislike to darkness. Mrs. Anson was exquisitely dressed as usual. But there was a sullen look, almost of suffering, in her face as she leant back in her chair near the fireplace, listlessly watching the flames flash and leap back from the diamonds on her hands.

Mr. Anson was carelessly playing with a young poodle—a pet of his daughter's

—which had enconcealed itself on his knee, every animal that came near him invariably attaching itself to his person.

He was a fair man, with a good-humoured face, inclined to redness, as his handsome figure was too corpulent. He presented a strong contrast to his brother, whose frame, without an ounce of superfluous fat, might have been that of an athlete in constant training. Without any of the good looks of his brother, Hesketh Anson was a model of muscular and mental strength. His dark-complexioned face, too, with its harsh lines, was the exact opposite to the fair skin and finely-cut features of his brother.

He was absorbed in some notes in his pocket-book; and as he sat there, his face keen and poring with concentrated thought, ugly calculating lines deepened about his mouth and eyes, and made his face that of a man of whom few would venture to ask a favour.

He closed his note-book, the cold scheming abstraction of his eyes giving place to a more alert decision.

"We can't let Robson have Dale Farm at that figure," he said; "we must hold out for another hundred pounds for it."

"Lord! what a screw you are!" said his brother, with a half-lazy, half-contemptuous laugh. "You seem to have missed your vocation. You should have been in the rag-and-bone line. You would have made a handsome profit out of an old hat."

Hesketh Anson made no remark. He scarcely even noticed the taunt. The calculating abstraction still shadowed his eyes.

"No. I'll try and get over to McGeorge's to-morrow, and tell him that we'll see his friend about the matter. He is dead on having the farm, I believe, and will give us our price if we hold out. Robson can't."

His brother shrugged his shoulders, and there was a second's silence. Then a thought roused him for a moment out of his indolent indifference.

"Old Robson will be awfully cut up," he said. "He has set his heart on his nephew having Dale Farm—and you know—I half promised it to him that afternoon in Weybourne."

"I wish to goodness, Jim, you would leave me to manage matters," said Hesketh Anson, with a savage note of impatience in his voice. "You are always putting in your oar and spoiling things. Either I manage these business affairs or you do!"

Jim Anson made a gesture of careless

resignation and turned away from his brother.

"What is Dolores doing that she isn't downstairs yet?" he asked of his wife, something enlightening the ignoble indifference of his face as he mentioned his child's name.

"She's not coming down to-night at all!" said his wife shortly, rousing herself from her listlessness, and giving him an account of what had taken place.

"The deuce!" said Mr. James Anson when she had finished. "Who could have thought that that prim little white-faced chit would have had it in her?"

It must be confessed that Mr. James Anson had been considerably disappointed in the appearance of Miss Mallet, which in no ways tallied with the enthusiastic description Dolores had given him of her.

"I think it was very hard on the poor child," said Mrs. Anson, darting an angry look at her brother-in-law, "and very presuming on Miss Mallet's part to insist on punishing her in that way. I shouldn't have allowed it, only Hesketh made me."

"Is Hesketh ranging himself on the side of school-room morals and propriety?" asked Jim Anson, with a lazy laugh. "I could have understood it better if the guardian angel had appeared in a little more alluring shape. I felt like a bad boy in school as she sat looking at me over the teapot with that slow, severe gaze. Rather pretty eyes, too—if they didn't freeze you."

"If you mean to try and keep her here, Dolores will have to behave better," said Hesketh Anson.

"What's the good?" exclaimed Mrs. Anson, the ill-humour in her beautiful face changing into bitterness. "As soon as the snow melts, and she can get out, they will all be at her, and there will be more scenes and impertinences—and then she will be off, like the rest of the hateful, spiteful, gossiping creatures——"

A look of intense pity softened for an instant her husband's eyes, but it vanished in cynical laughter.

"It's rough on Hex," he said. "I really think it isn't fair to let him face all the outraged proprieties. 'Pon my word, though, I think I'd rather interview the raging specimens of shocked good ladies than face the severity of that girl upstairs. A chap would have a bad quarter of an hour with her if she cut up rough!"

There was a rather grim look in Hesketh Anson's eyes, as if he were quite aware of that fact.

Washington appeared at that moment to announce with pompous solemnity that dinner was served.

But the gloom that had touched the three as they sat together in the drawing-room followed them into the dining-room. The meal was a very silent one. Though neither of the men commented on the fact, they both missed keenly the bright, chattering presence of the child, who—spoilt, wilful, selfishly indulged as she was—was still the ray of sunshine in that great, shadow-haunted home. The thought of her suffering made them feel her absence still more. Mrs. Anson's thoughts were absorbed in herself.

As the dinner came to an end, the fire that had been burning in her heart blazed up. She stopped as she reached the door, which Hesketh Anson held open for her, and turned back to look at her husband seated at the oval flower-decked table, with its blaze of candles and glitter of silver.

"It is beyond endurance!" she exclaimed, pale with passion, all the fire in her nature ablaze in her eyes. "I will not stand it any longer; I shall go mad! Let me go away, Jim—to the farthest corner of the earth, if I must! But let me go. If you will not come, let Dolores and me go alone. You and Hex are killing me—and you both know it. I hate him—and if you keep me here any longer, I shall hate you too. Let me go."

"Missie Anson—good Lord—Missie Anson!" whispered an anxious voice in the hall behind her, and Washington, who was just returning to the dining-room with a bottle of old wine for which his master had sent him, made a warning gesture to the drawing-room opposite, out of which at that instant the bold-faced housemaid happened to be coming.

With a furious look at him, Mrs. Anson turned and swept out of the dining-room.

The housemaid, who might or might not have heard her, was leisurely disappearing into the back of the hall.

Mrs. Anson, perfectly indifferent, for the moment, to her existence, went straight up to her room. There was a second's strained pause in the dining-room, and then Hesketh Anson turned back to the dinner-table. His brother sat there, a strange, crushed look on his face.

"Good Lord!" he said, in a hoarse voice. "She's right."

Hesketh Anson did not answer; but he poured himself out a big bumper of the wine before him.

Washington, with an almost ludicrous affectation of ignoring what had passed on his face, came up with pompous officiousness with the fresh bottle of wine.

"Curse you!" said his master savagely. "What do you bring me that mawkish stuff for? Bring me the brandy."

Washington, a greyish pallor tinging his ebony face, hesitated, glancing appealingly at Hesketh Anson.

"You don't want brandy," said the latter curtly.

But his brother turned on him savagely.

"Curse you!" he said furiously. "Let me alone. Don't you boss the show enough as it is? I can't even call my soul my own. You've got everything else in your own hands. Just let me go to the devil in my own way."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

LEILA, in the darkness of her own room, cried herself to sleep that night as any forlorn little school-girl might have done. Her wounded arm throbbed and ached. No one troubled to attend to it for her. But no thought of deserting her post, and so depriving the beloved invalid in that distant Cornish village of the necessities that post would provide, entered her head. Even her prayers scarcely seemed to bring her the counsel and consolation which they usually did. But they must have comforted her more than she knew, for she fell, after a time, into a deep and restful sleep, out of which she was suddenly startled, as she had been that first night she had slept there.

Ever since that night she had felt a great disinclination to sleep in the dark. But she had been ashamed to ask Martha for the night-lights, which the woman had herself the first day urged on her with an almost tiresome persistence. She always made up her fire into a bright blaze before getting into bed, and besides that, in spite of cold and boisterous winds, opened the shutters and drew up the blinds, that any moonlight there should be, as well as the first rays of dawn, could fall into her room. Her fancies and fears were so vague that she could scarcely define them herself. But it almost seemed as if the liking the Ansons showed for light had affected her too. The moonlight to-night was falling full into her room through the small-paned windows which, with the high wainscotings, and heavy oak beams, and the old furniture left untouched still in many of the rooms, recalled always, in

spite of Mrs. Anson's efforts, the fashion of a day that had long passed away.

It fell in a stream of cold white light, chequered by the shadows of the lattice-work across the floor, reaching to the bedside. In its ghostly radiance, bare-footed, stood a shadowy, white-clad figure, calling to her with the sorrowful cry that had roused her out of her sleep:

"Miss Mallet! Miss Mallet!"

As Leila started up on her pillows the slender figure scrambled up on the bed beside her, flinging loving arms round her, pressing a wet, burning cheek to hers.

"Miss Mallet! Please forgive me! I haven't been able to sleep! Oh! don't go away, but stay, please, and teach me how to be good! I am so sorry!"

A tender arm closed round the little penitent, and for a moment the sobbing child and the girl, with her lovely tear-dimmed eyes, clung close together.

"You won't go away!—though Uncle Hex says you will. He wants you to do so, I know! And I love you so!"

"I won't go away, I promise you! No one shall make me leave you!" said Leila, with a passionate defiance of Hesketh Anson.

The child nestled closer into the warm, protecting arms of her new friend, who, alarmed for the result of that midnight journey through the cold house, tried to warm the icy feet and hands.

"You shouldn't have come, darling, like this, without any wrap—all this way, too, through the cold passages." Dolores slept in a room opening off her mother's. Then a sudden thought came to her, turning her as cold as the child herself. In the excitement of the moment she had overlooked the strange fact.

"But how did you get into my room?" she exclaimed involuntarily. "The door was locked!" She had, as she had done every night on entering her bedroom, fastened it, and made sure that it was secure. It had been fastened on the inside. How could the child have opened it from the outside?

"It wasn't locked when I came!" said Dolores, already growing drowsy with returning warmth and the peaceful rest of a soul forgiven. She was exhausted mentally and physically with the strength of her emotions. "Perhaps the Grey Boy unlocked it!" dreamily. "He does sometimes, and if the rooms are dark, he comes—in—good night—kiss me."

Leila bent and kissed the child, whose

sleepy voice broke off with a contented sigh, and in a few moments she was asleep.

Leila lay down beside her, but she did not sleep. She lay there, her eyes fixed on the door, which stood ajar as Dolores had left it. And as she watched it, faintly defined in the moonlit shadow, all sorts of weird and horrible fancies haunted her over-excited imagination. Sometimes the narrow opening, with the blackness of the room beyond as a background in which unknown perils might be lurking, seemed to be stealthily widening; sometimes long white fingers seemed to creep round the edge.

Once she fancied, as sleep began at last to dim her aching eyes, that she saw a grey shadowy figure stealing forward from the darkness towards that stream of light as it fell, cold and white from a dead world, across her chamber floor. But as it reached the brink of that unearthly radiant stream, the figure faded into nothingness, as if its mysterious light lay an impassable barrier between it and its human prey.

#### CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTMAS DAY fell on a Sunday.

Leila had been at Moorlands for three weeks. The bad weather and snow-blocked lanes had made it almost impossible as yet for any one to walk as far as the church, a distance of about a mile and a half.

Till now, Leila had scarcely been outside the gates. She found that the Ansons themselves never went to church, while Christmas Day came and went entirely unnoticed. It was evident that any attempt of her own to attend service would be strongly if silently opposed.

But she had determined that, at the cost of any fatigue and difficulty, she would go to church on Christmas morning. An unpleasant incident occurred on Christmas Eve.

On going to bed she found a note on her dressing-table. Considerably surprised, she opened it. It began abruptly, and was unsigned. But the recollection that the bold-faced housemaid had been summarily dismissed the house that day gave a clue to the writer. At first she was inclined not to read it. The girl, whose manner and appearance she disliked intensely, could have nothing to say to her, and an anonymous communication was always cowardly and despicable. Then a name caught her eye, and a wave of pleasant recollection swept over her. She seemed to feel once more the firm pressure of the friendly hand, to hear

the kindly-spoken offer of assistance; for if his words had not actually formulated the promise, Dr. Burton's eyes and tone had assured her of his warm interest. She had not seen him since. What could the girl have to do with him? And curiosity, which was not all idle, prevailed over principle, to meet its own punishment. As she laid down the letter, she wished with all her heart that she had not read it.

It was badly written and badly spelt, breathing malice and insolence in every word. For all its bravado, the writer was plainly furious at her own dismissal.

"If you will excuse me taking the liberty, you will follow a friend's advice and get out of this wicked house as soon as you can. The writer of this would have warned you before, if you hadn't thought it was beneath your notice to look at poor servant-girls, who is honest and respectable if they aren't black, whose wickedness isn't to be talked of. And it isn't only a poor servant who warns you. Dr. Burton would say the same. Ask him. And of all the wickedest women Mrs. Anson is the wickedest, though she does dress up so finely, and everybody will tell you. Not a Christian soul ever comes near this house, and no servants—except those low black things—or governesses stay. They lose their character at once, and nothing would have made me demean myself to come, if that hateful bad woman Martha hadn't almost gone on her knees to beg me to come, and offered wages to tempt any poor Christian girl to forget what was due to her respectable soul. And if it hadn't been for them as takes an interest in you, too, and is the most generous and truest gentleman as ever walked, and he doesn't live so far from here neither; nothing would have induced me to stay in the house of murderers. For they do say that Mr. and Mrs. Anson murdered one or two people before they came here from those unbeknown outlandish parts, and that she's no better than she should be, and that's why no one comes to see them; and there is murder going on now, for I heard Mrs. Anson herself accuse Mr. Anson and Mr. Hesketh the other night in one of her tantrums, which is no wonder she has such a wicked, awful child as that Miss Dolores, whose tempers and whims is indulged till no good Christian, let alone a dog, could live with her; and if you will be advised, you will go as the others did when they was warned, and not stay to be murdered in

your bed, and find out too late that your character is gone, and no lady will employ you as a governess again; and, if you are wise, you will go at once. The Grey Boy has begun to walk again, and when he does, it always means harm to them as lives in this wicked house, with passages and rooms enough to give you the creeps. He was seen the day you came, and there was near a bad accident on the line, and Mr. Hesketh was in the train, and it was the Grey Boy as did it, to kill him. And you might have been killed, too, and if the Grey Boy didn't put the sleeper on the line, he put it into the head of some one else to do it, so that Mr. Hesketh should come to harm, and there'll be death yet in the house now he has begun to walk. I wouldn't sleep another night with such a wicked lot for the biggest wages in the country."

Lella flung the letter in the fire. But she did not go to bed that night. She sat over her bedroom fire, placing her chair so that she could face the door of the room, which, though she locked it securely inside at night, could be found open a few hours later. She lighted all the candles in the room, and piled up the fire, sitting there nearly all night, dozing off at times to wake in a panic of expectation and terror. Nor until the night had passed once more into the morning hours of the returning day did she lie down to rest.

When she came down on Christmas morning, ready dressed for her walk, she saw Hesketh Anson in the hall. He was at the foot of the staircase, and he waited there until she descended, a sober-clad, slender figure, with the winter sunlight shining through the window on the staircase upon her, and catching the beautiful shades in her hair. It was dressed differently, to suit the fastidious taste of Dolores, and the alteration was wonderfully becoming to her. The young man's face as he looked up at her seemed to take a more set expression. Then his eyes fell on the book in her hand.

"You are going to church!" he exclaimed, with a quick contraction of his brow. "It is impossible to walk so far in such weather!" and he turned away to send a message to the stables. But she ran after him.

"It will be no use, Mr. Anson," she said breathlessly, "I am going to walk!" Her eyes were full of her dislike of him.

"Very well," he said, with a short laugh. "If you don't come back, we will

organise a search for you in the snow-drifts. I would not keep you from church for the world. Especially to-day, when Christian folk meet to sing of good-will to each other. You will find plenty where you are going."

She did not answer the sneer.

It was a longer walk and more fatiguing than she expected. Service had begun when she reached the church.

There was a young man in the pew into which the verger showed her, and looking up, Lella met the smiling eyes of Dr. Burton. She flushed crimson, and with a faint, shy smile in return, she averted her eyes, and for the rest of the service did not glance again in his direction.

The moment the service was over she rose to hurry out before the rest of the congregation. But she had not gone far when she was overtaken by Dr. Burton. With a courteous apology he addressed her, and under the strange circumstances of her life at Moorlands, and with the recollection of the pitying interest in his eyes when he learned that day at the station that she was going there, it scarcely seemed surprising or impertinent his doing so. At least, she accepted simply the renewal of that brief travelling acquaintanceship.

He walked on by her side, noticing, as he offered her the good wishes of the season, how much, in some ways, her appearance had improved. Her eyes were brighter, her colouring prettier and less delicate.

"You are happy there?" he asked abruptly. "Forgive me, I forgot for a moment I was a stranger," as he saw the distressed look that crossed her face. "Only——" he waited as if expecting her to speak. But she did not, and after a second he changed the topic.

"How did you get here? Surely they did not let you walk?" in a tone of disgust.

She quickly explained that it was her own wish. He glanced at her; something a little baffled veiled his eyes for a second. Her quick, shy look of pleased surprise on seeing him had been so pretty, she had so simply and frankly accepted the renewal of what had been, after all, but the merest scrap of an acquaintanceship, and yet it seemed as if some invisible barrier stood between him and a possibility of more confidential relation between them.

"Miss Mallet!" he exclaimed more directly, "what on earth persuaded your people to let you go to such a house as that? They couldn't have known what

sort of place it was!" indignantly. "Have not you heard?"

Her face told him that she had done so.

"But it isn't true!" she exclaimed. It was a question.

"I don't know how much is true, or not," he said. "I only know that not a soul ever darkens their doors, or exchanges a word with them. That they came a few years ago, from—no one knows where—bringing those black servants with them, and they have never been able to keep a white one. They seem to know no one. When they first came—at the very beginning, people thought of calling—but one day some man came into the neighbourhood who had apparently known them abroad—I believe they came from South America—and he hinted at such a black past too dark for you to hear, that every one avoided them, and so they have lived ever since."

"What—could the man only hint at such things!" disdainfully thinking of the spiteful anonymous letter.

"They did not deny it, anyway!" he said. "And"—he glanced down at her, as they walked down the wintry lane—"have you noticed nothing strange? One lady who was there like yourself told me that Mrs. Anson had the wickedest eyes she had ever seen, and that every one in the house seemed always afraid—Ah! you have noticed it too," the quick, searching sight of his professional training reading her face like a book.

"But it is nonsense!" she exclaimed. "It is all fancy. Of course there are no ghosts," and she laughed, but the sound was forced, and did not deceive the doctor.

The next question on his lips was suddenly silenced.

They had just turned out into the high-road from the bye-lane. Carriages and pedestrians coming from the church were passing along the road. A dog-cart, coming from the opposite direction, drew up before them. Hesketh Anson was driving it. He took no notice of Dr. Burton.

"I am glad I have not missed you, Miss Mallet," he said. He had come to fetch her, and Lella's face was full of defiant annoyance. The young doctor saw it.

"Perhaps Miss Mallet would rather walk," he said quietly. "And I shall be most pleased to act as her escort."

The appearance of Hesketh Anson on the scene had already excited the attention of the passers-by. One or two village boys actually stopped a few yards away to stare,

and even the county people as they drove up in their carriages, turned quickly to look at the little group in the road: the doctor, the young girl who was a stranger to them all, and Hesketh Anson of Moorlands.

"It is too far for Miss Mallet to walk back," said Hesketh Anson. "And it is beginning to snow again. I think you had better drive," addressing her with a different note in his voice.

The doctor began a quick remonstrance. But Lella's action checked him.

Her woman's sense of the fitness of things came to her rescue. Dr. Burton was a complete stranger to her, and after all, living, as she was, under the Ansons' roof, it was Hesketh Anson who should escort her home, and she declined the doctor's offer. He bit his lip; but he made no further objection.

The drive was a perfectly silent one. She never forgot it to the end of her days. The white expanse of country on either side, the scattered falling flakes of snow, which fluttered cold and gently against her face, the silent companion by her side, the stress and misery of the doubts

that rent her, a pale and silent herself, she sat there, striving to decide what she should do—the very first time in her short, inexperienced life that she had been called to make a crucial choice, unadvised, unaided.

Hesketh Anson broke the silence as they approached Moorlands.

"Are you going to stay?"

She had come to a conclusion, whether right or wrong, she was not wise enough yet to know. But she had decided, thinking of her aunt and Dolores.

"Yes," she said quietly.

"I am sorry for you," he said, after a slight pause, "but it is better for Dolores. Miss Mallet," he spoke again, "might I give you a word of advice? That fellow Burton isn't worth your notice. He'd sell his soul for a decently round sum."

She flashed a look of contempt at him. He was afraid of Dr. Burton, and vented his fear in malicious spite.

He caught the expression, and he said no more, but had she not been so certain in her judgement of him, she might have noticed the drawn look of dogged suffering that touched his face.

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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

BY MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.)

Author of "*Aunt Hepsy's Foundling*," "*My Land of Beulah*," "*Bonnie Kate*," "*The Peyton Romance*," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XVII. THE VERDICT.

TAKEN as a regiment, the Hundred and Ninety-Third was passing through a sad and troublous time. There is nothing so depressing to your soldier as the idea of a court-martial. The notion of the irresistible power attached to that organisation is to him overpowering; and all knew that the tribunal ordained to sit in judgement upon Private Harry Deacon was about to assemble. No one underrated the heinousness of the crime that was charged against the accused—attempted murder, with all the cowardly adjuncts of an attack upon a man defenceless and unprepared. But Harry, like many another ne'er-do-weel in this world, had been a favourite; and a kind of simple romance hung about him, since all knew of the love borne to him by pretty Norah O'Connor. Would they ever forget the poor lass, hanging about the gate the day that Harry was up at the triangles, and Miss Drew—Heaven bless the sweet name of her!—comforting her as best she could? Ah, but Harry had never done much good since then; it broke the heart of him—and he was such a one for a glass, and got led away. In truth, they were as tender over him as they could be, handling his sin gently, and treating it as something he was hardly responsible for, at the time, being what you may call "out of himself."

The older soldiers took the matter in more solemn form, knowing that the very

foundations of regimental security were shattered by such crimes. But all—young and old—were full of regret and sympathy for the victim. One psalm of praise of all the Colour-Sergeant's good qualities, both as a man and a soldier, rose on all sides; and it was like a sudden ray of sunshine running down the ranks, when on parade one cloudy, gusty, autumn morning, the news was set going that the doctor had good hopes of Colour-Sergeant Hubert Smith.

But nothing could comfort Drummer Coghlan.

Private McMurdock was in the same plight. A batch of new recruits arrived; "chaps with two left legs, an' not a haporth o' sence amang the lot," and the celebrated dog story was not told to them. These two, Coghlan and McMurdock, had tried to save the boy Deacon—and had failed.

The two old soldiers were for ever consulting together as to the fate of Deacon; and it was a very serious view they took. Unhappily, what are called military murders had been terribly rife just then, no fewer than four cases having come about in the last six months.

"I dinna like the look o' things," said McMurdock. "But the Queen—God bless her!—She knows best, and we must abide by what She says."

Coghlan glanced at him sharply out of the corner of his eyes, yet refrained from words; you might twist the young sapling, but not the old gnarled oak. Indeed, why try? McMurdock's was a loyal and honest creed. It was a life-buoy that kept him afloat in the storm and stress of life's tossing ocean. Who would grudge it him?

"I'd like to see the lad," said Coghlan,



still harping upon poor Deacon; "he was mad as mad that night—murder—mad too. Shure I fancy I see him standin' all white an' grim by the window, an' his eyes same as a dead man's—fixed an' bright—an' 'he's down—down—down!' says he in a voice that ran through you like a bayonet; 'down—down—down!'"

"Whatever had he agen the Colour-Sergeant—a likely mon an' as fine a mon as stood the Hundred and Ninety-Third? Never an ill word did he spake to no man, and no man spake an ill word of him. But I tell thee Harry was a fiery, jealous-hearted rascal, that was he, an' he thought—he'd a mind to think—that some one meant harm to the girl Norah. I tell thee, Drummer Coghlan, Harry Deacon shot the wrong man."

Shuddering down Coghlan's back like streams of cold water came memories of the night when Deacon played the part of Minnymin, and of the tall awinging figure that crossed the square, the figure that was so like that other. "You're not to be after spakin' the thought that's in your heart, McMurdock; we're owld sojers, an' we're good sojers, an' we know our duty," said Coghlan, deeply disturbed, "an' we'd bite our blissid tongues out av us before we'd be spakin' avil av thim as be sit over us. Now there's Mullins, whin he wants a thing said that he knows is not what a soldier should say, he gits his wife—dacint woman—to say it for him. Then he blagiarde her before folk for sayin' it; but said it is, an' set in the blissid light av day, and him kipt innocent-like an' a thrue man. But we're neither of us married wid leave—yit—so we have to do our own spakin', bad or good."

"Ah!" chimed in the other, "there's a sight o' fine feelin's has to be smothered up in this world. I wish we could see the lad Harry, if it was but a glint o' his face. He was clean daft when he did the deed, an' I'd like to go before the court an' say so right straight out."

But Coghlan took a sterner view of matters.

"Murder's murder," he said, "an' a rig'ment's a rig'ment."

Then they both shook their heads as if that last argument were conclusive, and a thing that could not be wrestled with.

But all this was before the great news became known. Then, of course, everybody vowed they were not a bit surprised, and all the women said "I told you so;" but nothing else was talked about, and

there was constant discussion of every particular of the strange story of how Colour-Sergeant number one company was a "titled gentleman," and how his father and mother were on their way from England to see him; how two or three orderlies were "kept on telegraphing all day long," in answer to messages of one kind or another; and, strangest of all, how the Colonel and this man's father were old friends and school-fellows. Never in the memory of the oldest soldier had there been such a state of excitement and turmoil all through the regiment! Such a rush of events one after another might well take away the breath of a community, and set it gasping.

The band-boys, talking over Sergeant Smith, said with proud regret, "Weren't he darned pertickler?" and one, reaching forward to the distinction of a future interview, vowed he should "salute that sharp you'd think I'd cut my bloomin' 'ed in two;" but another, more worldly wise, said with contempt of the other's ignorance, "He won't come back to us, bless you, not he. You'll just see 'im going hout in a coach and six, an' 'ave to squeeze yer back agen the wall to let 'im pass."

Coghlan and McMurdock took the new departure as a personal insult.

"As I hear," said a young soldier to the former, "Colour-Sergeant number one company has turned out to be a livin' lord."

"He was precious near after bein' a dead one," replied Coghlan.

"An' a livin' dog's better than a died lord," put in McMurdock. "You attend to your drill, my lad, an' one o' these days they may make a soldier of you; that's enoo' for you to think of, and leave ither folk to mind their ain business."

"He was mighty well as he was, and I'm wontherin' why they wanted to change him, an' spoil as fine a non-commissioned officer as iver stipped behind a company—bad cess to them!" growled Coghlan, and McMurdock again added his quota.

"He was a guid mon, if they'd a let him be, an' I'm not goin' to credit as Harry Deacon had a grudge against him; it's all a mistake, somehow, an' the puir lad was daft wi' drink an' folly."

In both these speeches the plural pronoun was mysterious. Maybe "they" stood for circumstances. It soon got to be known that an interview had taken place between the victim and the would-be murderer. No one had seen the culprit

taken to or from the hospital; but the news very quickly got about. Very few particulars were known, for the two or three present on the occasion were dumb; but it was said that the Hospital Sergeant looked subsequently upset, and this small detail in itself spoke volumes as to the agitating nature of the occasion. It was as if one had spoken of a granite boulder being disturbed in its mountain fastnesses.

Another particular that leaked out was the fact that Harry Deacon had been led out from the presence of the man whose life he had striven to take, blinded by tears, and shaking with sobs like a woman. Those who saw this sight said they wished they might never see such another. At that time the balance hung perilously between life and death for the Colour-Sergeant. The swords still stabbed his labouring breast with every breath he drew, and sometimes he seemed to pass into that borderland that lies between time and eternity, where dreams and realities get mingled together in inextricable confusion. Yet even through the mists, as a lark's song pierces the grey on a cloudy day, came the echo of Alison's song:

The King of Love my Shepherd is.

The King of Love—of mercy—of reconciliation. The thought beat its high and holy lesson into the man's dazed brain. Forgive—forgive—forgive! even as you hope to be forgiven.

Hubert Claverdon—it is well to give him his right name now—had a wild and stormy past to look back upon. Not, perhaps, a very black one, as the world counts blackness, but dark enough to have caused the mother who idolised him to weep her eyes dim, and his father to turn from him as from some stranger.

He had burnt his boats, cut himself free from the old life and all its ties. If he came to be wept over as dead, better than wept over as worthless. His sins would be forgotten and forgiven; the heart of the mother would cherish only the sweet and tender memories of his boyhood—the loving clasp of little arms about her neck; the fond, if noisy, greeting of the school-boy home for the holidays; the little birthday gift he bought for her with pardonable pride, its truest value the love that dictated it. She would forget the darker shadows of his young manhood; she would blot out even their traces with her gentle tears. And so, as many a world-stained man has done before

him, he sought salvation through the ranks, and he had found it, not only in the life of discipline, but still more fully in an absorbing and apparently perfectly hopeless love. Love that has for its object a noble woman, and is without hope, is tried as by a refiner's fire, and is more spiritual than of the earth. Love had taught Hubert Claverdon some of the highest and purest lessons of life; it was teaching him the highest of all now—that of the duty of full and free forgiveness of wrong.

"As God is my witness I had no grudge against you," said Deacon, cowering away from the sight of the changed face, the labouring breast of his victim. "I did the deed in a moment of madness. I would have given my own life to undo it, as I dropped my rifle on the stones and saw you lying there on your face. I had done it a hundred times in my dreams—a hundred, hundred times."

"What harm had I done you?" asked the Sergeant, wonder growing in his sunken eyes; then, even this plaint seemed to take the form of a flaw in the fulness and freeness of pardon, and he sighed as he said, wearily turning his head: "Never mind, it is all over now, and whatever comes—you and I part—friends."

The manacled hands could not touch that feeble one upon the coverlet, but the impulse to do so was betrayed by the faint clink of the chain between Deacon's wrists.

We who know the ins and outs of this story are well aware that the likeness in figure and gait between Colour-Sergeant and Adjutant was the secret of this tragedy; and it so chanced that on the fatal day Ellerton had been detained on duty rather late, and seen going about in uniform and not mufti.

The brain of the would-be murderer was dazed with drink, his heart inflamed with the raging fires of jealousy and hatred, a flame roused to madness by the chance sneer of an acquaintance. Before his eyes was a blood-red mist, and the rifle trembled in his grasp, as from the sheltering shadow of a doorway he took aim at the passing figure, which, leaping high, and flinging up wild arms to the bright sky as if in piteous appeal to Heaven, fell with a sickening thud, face downward on the stones.

It was all the work of a moment—all done in the warmth and glow of the quiet autumn sunshine.

A woman in the married quarters singing her child to sleep, stopped short in her song, crying out to her husband that some one was shot; and in an instant, capless, scarlet-coated figures leapt and ran, and strong hands tearing the still smoking rifle from the murderer's hand, held him in fierce grip, with hoarse and smothered execrations in their throats.

It was such a little time ago, and yet, how long ago it seemed now, to those most nearly connected with it!

Surely for a lifetime had Norah taken her daily way to the little chapel where the red light burned so steadily—pitilessly it seemed to her—and there besought dear Heaven for the life of the sin-stained man she loved!

Father John watched her with a tender, yearning pity that was still helpless to comfort. As he said his early mass, he prayed that the great Comforter who can comfort so much better and more surely than man, might at length—however far off in the future—console the sorrow that was too deep for human hand to touch or heal. In all his holy, simple life, he had never known such a grief. Terrible knowledge, too, was locked within his troubled breast. To him the identity of the man Private Deacon of the Hundred and Ninety-Third Regiment intended to kill was no mystery. Thankful indeed was the good old priest that he did not know the name and status of that man. Enough, and more than enough, he knew to account for the black sin of murder attempted on that sunny day, whose brightness and beauty was marred by a terrible tragedy. Silence was now his duty to the girl whose name would be bandied about as that of some wanton, were the truth known—nay, not the truth in very truth, but that garbled version of it which would soon be set going like some slimy reptile creeping in and out among the throngs of men. For who would believe the pure and perfect innocence of the lowly-born and simple maid? What he could say—the good father who knew every secret of her heart—would go for naught. The child of his tenderness and his prayers would be flouted by the world that is ever so ready to be cruel to a woman; her name would be made a jest and by-word of among those who were not worthy to tie the little ribbon of her pretty shoe.

Norah's good name must be protected and held sacred; but the good old man

set his sparse teeth—and, maybe, wished the power were his to utter a strong, expressive word or two—when he thought of the man who had escaped scot-free, and of the man, innocent of all wrong, who now lay doing grievous battle with death. It will be seen that Captain Ellerton's sins and shortcomings took a deeper hue in the eyes of Father John than they would have taken in those of the average man of the world. Still, even the priest fully recognised the entire absence of any justification of Deacon's crime, and the reasonableness of the old decree, a life for a life.

There is, we know, a very narrow line between the vehemence of the passions of hatred and revenge, and the exaltation of madness. The brain of a man excited alike by strong drink, and the whirl of a raging anger, is like a horse that the rider's hand cannot guide or control. The lust to kill—terrible child of unrestrained passion—was the demon that had wrought such ill, blighting poor Norah's life and love for ever. Hardly less eagerly than those about the injured man's bed, did Father John hunger for news of his state, long and pray that life might win, and cruel death might lose. Day in and day out his venerable figure made its appearance at the big gates leading into the square, as with gentle persistency he asked for news from the hospital. Once when the doctor's verdict was a little more hopeful, the old man bared his grey head as he listened, the soldiers about the gate wondering all the while, and smiling one to the other.

But of all this Father John saw nothing. Was not Norah waiting at the turn of the road—the little shawl upon her head pulled low about her face, and from the shadow her great eyes, larger now from the hollows that tears had worn about them, gazing, weary, sad, eager, haggard in their misery, for the coming of the dark figure, the bearer of news, which in her simple heart she took to mean her Harry's life or death?

The first time that the news was that of a shadow of hope, the old man almost trotted in his eagerness to carry it quickly, and the people, hurriedly getting out of his way, crossed themselves, as a sort of set-off against having very nearly run up against the "holy prate."

How great was the joy of two hearts as he and Norah met that day! How she cried out in her gladness as she had never

done in her pain; and what a homely pathos gathered about the two figures as, banding slightly towards each other in their eager speech, they went with quickened footsteps, not home to the shanty by which the pigeons cooed so loudly in a glint of fitful sunshine, but on to the little chapel on the hill.

Simple, grateful hearts, with thoughts tending ever heavenwards, who would not wish you well, even though your faith be not theirs, nor ever could be?

At length came the all-important day when the President of the coming Court-Martial arrived in due state.

A tall soldierly man, with grey, almost white hair, cut close even for a man in the service, long grey moustache, and shaggy eyebrows, from beneath which peered a pair of keen dark eyes, keen and bright as steel.

"There's a pair of 'em," said an appreciative sentry, on the ally, after having duly saluted. "Soldiers hevery hinch of 'em—darn 'em!" this last ejaculation carrying the meaning of an unbounded admiration.

After that day a strange stillness fell upon the regiment. It was the stillness of expectation; the brooding gloom and silence that would be presently cleft by the sudden shaft of the lightning.

Men hung about the doors of the quarters in groups, speaking in hushed voices. Was not the dread tribunal sitting? Was it not also needful that any man who had ever been within miles of a Court-Martial should recount to every other man as many particulars as he could remember, and a great many that he could not? Mounted officers, members of the staff of the General commanding the district, gay with trappings, and jangling with chains, and swords, and spurs, came clanking in at the gateway, having ridden their horses into lather, as if their country's weal depended on their speed. These were watched with awe and great interest by groups of women and children assembled at the corners of the married quarters.

The man who, lying on his cot enjoying the flavour of the pipe of peace, had seen, framed in the opening of the doorway, the picture of a scarlet-coated figure that leapt high, and then, with lifted arms, fell prone, had to give his evidence, and came out from the ordeal looking as though he had tried to commit the murder himself. McMurdock, white through all his bronze, awaited his turn with a would-be courageous air that deceived no one. When the

summons came at last, he stood up jerkily, gasped out his one article of faith, and then, as it were, surrendered to fate, saying, "Lead me forth!" as if instant execution awaited him, and he were determined to meet death as a soldier should. Alas! his evidence proved the act to have been premeditated, not the hot impulse of a mad moment; and the President, stroking his moustache in a fiercely aggressive manner, said something in a low tone to the man next him. It came about in this way: there had been far too many military murders of late; one most terrible, one in which two lives—those of the Colonel and Adjutant—had been sacrificed; it was necessary to take some drastic and decided step; in a word, to make an example.

McMurdock, shrunk, shivering, his head drooping on his breast, in truth a wreck, had to be supported between two sympathising comrades to the canteen, and words were muttered, quickly growing into a strong electric thrill, that ran through the regiment from end to end.

A week later the verdict was made known.

Sentence of death had been passed upon Private Harry Deacon, of Her Majesty's Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment of foot, for the attempted murder of Colour-Sergeant Hubert Smith, of the same corps, and the condemned man was to be handed over to the civil authorities for the due carrying out of the sentence.

## LABOUR BUREAUX

THERE has just been issued by the Labour Department of the Board of Trade an extremely interesting blue-book, which contains the Report on Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed—genuine unemployed, men who are willing to work if any work can be found for them. England, as, indeed, is the case with almost all other countries, is in the throes of the Unemployed Question—how to provide work when the supply of workers is apparently constantly growing, and fast leaving behind the demand—and, under these circumstances, an official report, which contains all information as to the numbers of unemployed and their various trades, and as to the organisations for their assistance, cannot fail to be both opportune and helpful. It is peculiarly opportune at the season of the year when a greater number of workers are out of employment than at other times;

and helpful inasmuch as it teaches us much about a subject which is always cropping up, and about which most of us have but a vague and general idea.

The general scope of the enquiry dealt with in this blue-book, had reference "to questions of irregularity of employment and the evils caused thereby, i.e. to the extent and causes of such irregularity, and to efforts made in various ways to deal with distress and other evils resulting from want of work."

What this article intends to put before its readers is the work done by Labour Bureaux which have been set up in various localities to bring those in want of labourers in contact with those who desire work, and vice versa, and that, too, without any of that pauperisation which must attend the efforts of charitable societies. These latter, good enough in their way, very often are necessarily roundabout in their working, and in addition to providing work when they can, give money when they cannot provide work. The latter is not what the genuine unemployed prefers; it is work he wants, and not charity.

Of course, in classifying permanent agencies for the relief of the workless, the Poor Law comes first, but this does not deal with want of employment only, but with any destitution; and, moreover, under the Poor Law there can be no payment for work done in the shape of wages. After the Poor Law come the various voluntary agencies, of which the Charity Organisation Society takes first place; then several permanent voluntary agencies are highly developed, and deal with the relief of distress, including that arising from want of employment. Next come temporary agencies for relief, such as schemes for providing work by municipalities or temporary voluntary agencies; and then we have agencies for providing work for special classes, such as discharged soldiers, while the various Trade Unions, of course, to some extent act as vast Labour Bureaux.

This brings us down to the portion of the report with which we have more particularly to deal. Labour Bureaux do not as yet play a very important part in England; but there is no reason why, properly worked, they should not be very much increased. During last winter the Labour Department of the Board of Trade received information as to only twenty-five Labour Bureaux, fifteen being temporary, while

the remaining ten are more or less permanent. These ten are at Egham, Ipswich, Chelsea, Battersea, St. Pancras, Camberwell, Westminster, Bloomsbury, Wolverhampton, and Salford. It will be noticed that the majority are in London, the idea not appearing to have caught on in the large provincial towns. Also it will be seen that the small town of Egham is placed first, the Bureau at that place, indeed, being the pioneer in England. The temporary registries, for the most part, were started in exceptional times of distress by London Vestries and the local authorities. The report considers that in the case of permanent Bureaux there are two classes to be considered: those Bureaux which accept all applications for registration, and those which make some enquiry as to the applicants. The conclusion seems to be rather in favour of the first class, for employers would be more apt to use the Bureaux if the fact of registration carried proof of some capability for work on the part of the man registered.

The Egham Bureau, being the pioneer, is entitled to first description as to its working, and the result of that working. It was established in February, 1885, and the work connected with it is voluntary. It is made known by cards posted about the district and advertisements in the country papers, and is open to local residents, but if there is any vacancy for which a local man is not available, an outsider may have the chance of the work. In the register are the following particulars of each applicant: name, address, date, description of occupation required, when last employed, how long employed, applicant's remarks, date when employment is found and by whom. The registrar is only authorised to register *bonâ fide* workmen out of employment. There is no charge for registration, but those who obtain work by this means are invited to contribute threepence a week during the first few weeks of their engagement. This agreement, however, is entirely voluntary, and one of the first rules of the registry is "that the registrar shall scrupulously refrain from interference in any question of wages or condition of service, or labour troubles." For this reason men are not supplied to fill the places of men on strike, and in the register no notice is taken of membership of a Trade Union or of wage. An important factor to the success of this Bureau lies, no doubt, in the fact that the superintendent knows personally most of the

applicants, both employers and workers. The following are some statistics as to what was done by the Egham Labour Bureau from October, 1891, to December, 1892. Out of four farm labourers who applied, three were placed in situations; thirty-four out of forty-two gardeners were provided for; twenty-four out of thirty-five bricklayers; one out of two masons; forty-nine out of sixty-two carpenters and joiners; five out of nine plumbers; thirty out of forty-five painters; eighteen out of twenty-one stablemen, horsemen, etc.; ninety-three out of one hundred and sixteen general labourers; three men-servants, watchmen, and attendants; twenty-one boys out of thirty-two; eight charwomen, etc., out of eleven. This gives a grand total of two hundred and eighty-nine successful applications out of three hundred and eighty-two, which is certainly not a bad proportion.

Next in seniority is the Ipswich Labour Bureau, where the forms and registers are more elaborate than those of Egham. Additional questions are asked as to whether the applicant is married or single, what have been his average wages, and the cause of his leaving his last situation. In addition a certificate is required from the applicant's last employer to certify that the workman is competent, stating how long he employed him, and that his character and conduct were satisfactory. Here the management is in the hands of the honorary manager, who, however, would like to see the work taken over by the Municipality, and similar institutions established all over England, and federated together so as to "facilitate the circulation of labour." Registration is free, and the Bureau is neutral in trade disputes. The report gives as the reason for the success of this Bureau, "the energy expended by the manager in finding situations for workmen, and workmen for employers. He does not merely register applications and wait for corresponding offers, but actively exerts himself to find suitable employers or workmen, as the case may be." From October, 1891, to December, 1892, the total number of applicants was four hundred and fifty-eight, and of these one hundred and fifty obtained permanent and one hundred and forty-one temporary situations. The largest item consisted of ninety-two general labourers, for whom seventy-three situations were found; while out of twenty-six menservants, watchmen, and attendants, only five were provided for.

At Wolverhampton the Bureau was

started in connection with relief organisation works, which were formed to deal with distress in the town caused by scarcity of employment. At the beginning all applicants were registered, but soon it was found necessary to make an alteration, and it was decided "that only those applicants should be placed upon the register who could show that their being out of work was due to no fault of their own." But in Wolverhampton the Bureau was not a success—in contradistinction to Egham and Ipswich—and not more than twenty applicants had, at the time the Report was drawn up, been placed in situations through its agency.

The bureau at Salford was started as a temporary affair to deal with exceptional distress, but has continued and seems to have become permanent. In addition to the questions asked by the Egham Bureau, the applicant is asked here his length of residence in the borough and his physical condition. The number of situations compared with the number of applicants does not show anything like such good results as the Egham and Ipswich Bureaux; out of one thousand four hundred and fifty-six applicants, only two hundred and ninety-five were placed, but out of those applicants two hundred and seventy-three are said to have been registered before the Bureau was taken over by the Corporation. A weekly fly-leaf is published with particulars of the Bureau and employment required. The fly-leaf for one week sets forth that the Corporation has decided to continue the Bureau as a Labour Exchange for the borough, and expresses hopes that the Exchange will "prove an invaluable means of speedy communication between employers and unemployed." Continuing, the Committee ask for applications to the Bureau from those who need labour, whether skilled or unskilled, and say that they, the Committee, will do their best to "assure themselves of the fitness, both as to character and ability, of those whom they recommend for any situation, and they will strictly confine their operations to residents in the borough." This certainly seems like the proper way of going to work. Particulars are given as to how and where application is to be made, and as to what men are on the list, and ends with results up to date—the period included being twenty-nine weeks, and the results showing that, out of one thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight applicants, eight hundred and sixty-two were dealt

with as follows: employment was afforded by private employers to three hundred and thirty-three; by the Salford Corporation to one hundred and ninety; two hundred and five registrations were cancelled; temporary employment was found for seventy-eight; and fifty-six removals were cancelled. Indeed, Salford seems a very good specimen of what can be done by Labour Bureaux in large towns.

From Salford we come to London, where the most important Labour Bureau is that at Chelsea, which is worked by a committee of the Vestry, and was founded in October, 1891. All applicants must be resident in the parish; the details asked being the same as at other Bureaux; registration is free, but—and this seems a new departure—every man must re-register every seven days if he is still out of employment. And here, too, is another difference. Although the superintendent has general orders to work in harmony with trades organisation, "the Vestry have not officially laid down the principle that men are not to be sent to take the place of strikers." This principle, it will be remembered, is one of the fundamental principles of the Bureaux previously described, and seems to be very necessary for the insurance of smooth working. During the year 1892, three thousand four hundred and two people were registered, and employment was found for one thousand six hundred and forty-nine. Of these six hundred and sixty-eight were domestic servants, two hundred and ninety charwomen, one hundred and fifty boys, one hundred and twenty-one labourers, while the remaining four hundred and twenty men and women may be described as various. It will be noticed that the number of women here is somewhat large. The St. Pancras, Battersea, and Camberwell Bureaux were started first as temporary arrangements, but have been carried on and appear to be now permanent. They are run on much the same lines as the Chelsea Bureau, and a detailed description would be mere repetition.

Such are the permanent Bureaux reported to the Board of Trade. What the Committee has to say about them is simple enough. As a first essential to success it considers some form of selection necessary, or employers will not use the Bureaux, and this selection is, of course, more difficult in large towns than in a small place like Egham; secondly, it does not think that the Bureau should be in any way a relief agency; and thirdly, it is of opinion that

the Bureaux should steer clear of trade disputes by declining to supply men in the place of strikers, or, on the other hand, to register the names of strikers.

This article does not propose to describe the various temporary relief works started by municipalities and other local bodies, nor the French system of Labour Bureaux, for they would not be of much good to us as Labour Exchanges, but it may be interesting to glance at what has been done in our colonies. An account of what has been done in New Zealand we find in the reports of the Bureau of Industries presented to both Houses of the General Assembly. The Bureau was established in June, 1891. "The objects desired by the Government were the compilation of statistics concerning the condition of labour generally; the establishment of agencies for reporting the scarcity or overplus of workers in particular districts; the transfer of such workers from overcrowded localities to places needing labour; and, generally, the control of all industries for the physical and moral benefit of those engaged therein." This is a pretty inclusive and sweeping programme, but one which, after all, should be the real object of Labour Bureaux. Two hundred agencies were established, and the superintendents of these agencies had to forward every month a list with particulars as to unemployed persons in their districts, and make report as to various works, private and public, in their locality needing more workmen. The applicants are registered as in the English Bureaux, and if they have to go far for their work they are assisted by railway passes, "in some cases given free to those seeking work for themselves, but given to those proceeding to engagements only as advances, orders on the employers against future wages being signed by the men. Most of these advances on future pay are honoured when matured." Again, as in England, every effort is made to ascertain the bona fides of the applicants. The number assisted to employment from June, 1891, to May, 1892, was two thousand nine hundred and seventy-four, two thousand of whom were found work by private employers, while the others were drafted on to public works, which have played, as there is room for them to play in big colonies, an important part. This New Zealand report goes on to gravely consider the classification of employment of the poorer members of society. It considers that the dependent classes should be divided into

three distinct classes: the helpful poor, who only need guidance and direction to enable the work and the workers to be brought together; the helpless poor, who are to be regarded as subjects for benevolent aid; and the criminally lazy poor, who should be compelled to work, if necessary, under restriction—a wonderfully good division if it could be accomplished. The first division, of course, is the one which would benefit from the working of Labour Bureaux, but this New Zealand agency confesses that its present attitude is only a “confession of weakness and of inability to grapple with fast converging difficulties.”

In Victoria the system was tried, but the Government, in 1893, being forced to take to public works, and suffering tremendous Labour troubles in consequence, decided that the Bureau was an encumbrance, and on the twenty-second of May it was abolished. The Government of New South Wales opened a Bureau in February, 1892, and during one year no fewer than fifteen thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine persons were registered, of which number eight thousand one hundred and fifty-four found employment. In Queensland a Bureau was started in 1886, with branches, and during the last year four thousand two hundred and thirty persons out of seven thousand and thirty-three registered were found employment.

This closes the list of existing and successful Labour Bureaux, and before concluding, an account of the Annual Report of the Egham Bureau may not be uninteresting as showing the inner working of this mode of dealing with the Labour Question. Of course, the whole question is much too large to be dealt with here, and it must be understood that this Bureau forms only one of the many methods of dealing with the question. Now the Egham managers, having had longer experience, have greater weight; and their superintendent was examined before the Royal Commission on Labour, which fact is put forward in the report, and they go on to say: “It may be well to emphasize again the definite and obvious value of registries or employment agencies in country districts, as distinguished from their use in urban or populous neighbourhoods. In the country, employers are scattered, and the waste of a haphazard tramp for work is much more serious than in towns, and involves often a break-up of

the worker's home.” They go on to point out that the mere establishment of registries alone cannot evolve any fresh work, and that the registry can only flourish when it enjoys the confidence both of employers and employed. The publications of the Emigrants' Information Office, which contain information as to emigration, are sent to the Bureau; but the registry has not yet been able to offer any facilities for emigrants. An interesting item in the report is the total result of cost and employment procured for eight years. This is as follows: In 1885, one hundred and eighty-one applicants were provided for out of two hundred and twenty-three, at a cost of seven pounds nine shillings and twopence; in 1886, three hundred and seven men and eighteen boys out of three hundred and twenty-five applicants, at a cost of seven pounds eighteen shillings and twopence; in 1887, two hundred and sixty-nine men and twenty-two boys out of three hundred and sixty-nine, for nine pounds nine shillings and sixpence; in 1888, two hundred and two men and eighteen boys out of two hundred and eighty-nine, at a cost of nine pounds thirteen shillings; down to 1892, when two hundred and sixty-eight men and twenty-one boys out of three hundred and eighty-two applicants cost twelve pounds eighteen shillings and tenpence. This is a very low cost of working, which is another reason for the success of this Bureau.

The text generally comes first, but here it appears at the end of our article, and the text is taken from a note at the top of the Annual Report of the “Egham Free Registry for the Unemployed.” The note is to the effect that the registrar is constantly receiving applications as to information of how the registry is worked, to facilitate the formation of other local registries, and proceeds to give advice—one being a repetition of the secret of the success of the Ipswich Bureau, the necessity of selecting a competent, earnest, and impartial registrar, possessing business aptitude and a kindly interest in the success of his efforts to obtain employment for those entered in his book.

But the next note is the text wanted: “It is hoped that ultimately an organisation of local Free Labour Registries in country districts for the Unemployed, affiliated to county towns, and focussed at a metropolitan office, may be placed in correspondence with similar organisations in the Colonies and throughout the British



Empire. It is hoped, also, that in course of time local Registries may be associated with eleemosynary and Benefit Societies, at least as far as regards able-bodied men and lads who are receiving the assistance of such societies, and who are eligible for entry on the registrar's list."

That is the point: a large system of associated Bureaux working in communication with each other throughout the country and the Colonies, not small local bodies standing alone and being able to do good only in their own district. And who should work such a system? Is it right and fair for the work to be left in many instances entirely to private enterprise, with no help and little encouragement from any public bodies? The manager of the Ipswich Bureau is hopeful that the work may be taken over by the Corporation. So might it be for each local branch, but if ever the dream of an "affiliated system of Labour Bureaux at home and in the Colonies" comes to pass, surely it will have to be, not under private enterprise or municipal protection, but a great national movement worked by the Government.

One little point suggests itself in conclusion. Surely there must be some English word which would express the idea quite as well as the foreign "Bureau."

### A SKETCH IN MINNESOTA.

THE beautiful State of Minnesota is the special harvest-land of the Western world, and the lavish wealth of waving corn which glorifies the brilliant landscape resembles a sunset sea, rolling in shining billows to the blue rim of the distant horizon. As the ripened ears sway in the summer breeze, the amber waves deepen into orange, and brighten into red where buckwheat glows in the sun, or maize swings ruddy tassels amid feathery leaves. Tawny wheat pales into the gold of drooping oats, and the creamy tints of barley or rye on upland slopes, "white unto harvest," complete the scale of colour. Leagues of golden light and glancing shadow reveal the riches of the virgin soil whereon Nature pours her precious gifts in bounteous profusion, treasures old as the human race, and unchanged even in this Western clime. The harvests of the earth have been called "the golden links which unite the ages and the zones, making of the earth one great home, and of the human race one

great family." It is a curious fact that corn has never been known as anything but a cultivated plant; it cannot grow spontaneously, and is never self-sown, or self-diffused. A supernatural origin is ascribed to it in the mythologies of all ancient nations, and even the roving Indian of the American prairies speaks of the stately maize as "Mondámin," "the Spirit's Grain." Primitive types of all other esculent plants are scattered through the various quarters of the globe, but original types of the corn-plants are not to be found, and the grains of wheat taken from Egyptian tombs erected before the birth of history, are identical with the seed sown to-day. As we look upon the fair North-Western landscape teeming with the harvest gold which forms the truest wealth of earth, the beautiful idea of a famous German botanist seems especially applicable to the scene before us: "With corn is connected rest, peace, and domestic happiness of which the wandering savage knows nothing; harvest implies possession, imposes labour and restraint, and rivets the links of social life."

The great cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, once ten miles apart, but now virtually united, have attained their present status through the cereal wealth of these prairie lands; the machine factories of St. Paul, and the flour-mills of Minneapolis, though the largest in the United States, scarcely meeting the requirements of the ever-increasing tract of country cleared and cultivated in the great North-West. Even the picturesque Falls of St. Anthony, at the head of the Mississippi, have been sacrificed to the prosaic task of turning gigantic mills, and the fettered torrent, imprisoned within a network of wheels, dams, and sluices, has been changed from a romantic cascade to a manufacturing "water-power." The twin cities, busy, populous, and thriving, but destitute of all interest save that produced by the almighty dollar, suggest only the inevitable prose of life, which predominates until the social chaos rounds into form, and the comparative leisure of a settled condition permits the graces of existence to take root in congenial soil.

We soon exchange the busy hives of commerce for the sunny shores of Lake Minnetonka, encircled by a shining girdle of corn, wherein three miniature lakes are set like emeralds in a golden frame. The white tents of summer camping parties border these placid pools; fairy canoes

lie at the water's edge; a girl in blue swings in a scarlet hammock beneath the dark boughs of a lofty hemlock, while another fair maiden in white sits on a mossy log, fishing-rod in hand. Beyond the outlying meres the broad blue mirror of Lake Minnetonka reflects the evening sun. Picturesque waterside houses with wooden balconies mantled in crimson masses of Virginia creeper stud the velvet lawns of the curving coast, where intending passengers signal from tiny quays to the gaily-decorated steamer which plies on the winding lake. Painted skiffs flit across the water; flags wave on rocky knolls; and merry crowds dance in the open air, where bands are playing amid Chinese lanterns and Venetian masts. A ring of light twinkles round the shore, but on the dark and lonely borders of the Upper Lake, reached by a pine-clad channel, Nature is left to her own sweet will, and the murmuring water plashing on the rocks alone breaks the spell of silence and solitude. Fireflies illumine the dim recesses of dusky glades with galaxies of sparkling stars, and dance above the yellow corn which sweeps up to the black belt of shadowy trees. The vicinity of forest scenery to the centres of population is a special charm of Minnesota; Nature in the West conducts her operations on so vast a scale that the efforts of man seem only to tear the fringe of her garment, and from the great American continent we still receive impressions of a world newly created and radiant with the morning dew of youth.

The wild-looking Indians who stride along the streets of St. Paul and Minneapolis link the present with the past, but every year the red man recedes further into his native wilds, with a deepening distrust of his American conquerors which often breaks out in fierce rebellion against the ever-narrowing limitations of Indian liberty. Primitive ox-waggons, with huge wooden wheels, creak through the twin cities, bringing the produce of Red River prairies to the flour-mills, but civilisation advances so rapidly that every memento of a harder life and a ruder age is fast disappearing.

On the banks of the River Ste. Croix, a northern tributary of the mighty Mississippi, the primeval beauty of untrammelled nature is enhanced by the pageantry of the American "fall," which dyes hill and dale in matchless colouring. The little steamer starts from the rude settlement of Stillwater, a place of infinite possibilities in

that future which seems so strangely near to the energetic Western Stater. The weird scream of saw-mills fills the air with the monotonous sound which blends harmoniously with all rustic surroundings; reaping machines whizz and whirr on sunny slopes bright with the uniform gold of a ripened harvest. The glassy stream contracts between rugged cliffs at the mouth of the deep glen cleft by the winding waters, and the forest-crowned rocks burn with the transfiguring radiance of the transatlantic autumn. Huckleberry bushes flame along the shores, and coral clusters of mountain ash berries gleam from bronze and purple foliage. Graceful birches kiss the water with drooping boughs of burnished gold, and rose-flushed sugar maples deepen into scarlet where an early frost has touched their topmost branches. Crimson sassafras and plum-coloured sumach mingle feathery sprays, and butternut trees lift pyramids of saffron foliage towards the blue arch of heaven. The golden globes of the tasteless Osage orange shine like lamps amid the dark green boughs, and the russet hues of spreading oaks throw the brilliant foreground into high relief, though their indented leaves already brighten with faint reflections from the riotous colour of a landscape painted with the richest tints of Nature's palette. Carmine brambles drape the rocks, and the hickory displays a dazzling canopy of amethyst and amber, the tender tones melting into each other when a breeze rustles the variegated leaves. Only the black spruce and grey-green cedars retain their unchanged monotony of sober colouring, and relieve the dazzling splendour of the gorgeous woods. Here and there a lateral valley breaks away into the blue heart of distant hills, and brings a tributary stream to swell the current of the romantic Ste. Croix; the suggestive glimpse into an unknown region adding the touch of glamour and mystery without which the fairest scene lacks poetic charm. Quaint ferry-boats, constructed after the fashion of childhood's Noah's Ark, cross the tranquil tide, and countless rafts float downstream, steered by lumbermen in blue shirts, red caps and trousers. Beyond the secluded vale of Ojéola the boat rounds the sweeping curve of Cedar Bend, where the hoary branches of the interlacing trees form a grey roof overhead which shelters us from the sun. Green islets stud the dimpling river rushing in a clear brown flood over the pebbly bed, or

darkening into shadowy pools where the plunge of an otter breaks the motionless calm into a ring of whirling eddies as he vanishes into depths of gloom. The forest trees blaze with jewelled lustre in the sunset light, and as sudden darkness falls in the shade of towering cliffs, a torch at the bows illuminates the perpendicular walls of black rock known as the Dalles of Wisconsin and Minnesota, the river at this point dividing the two States.

On emerging from the dusky gorge into a placid sheet of moonlit water, the day's journey ends at a moss-grown quay, and we follow a mysterious lantern, held by an invisible guide, up a rocky path beneath overhanging boughs to a rustic inn, like a green nest set in a bower of leaves. In the dewy freshness of the September dawn, we follow the windings of the river to the rapids, a mile beyond the tiny hamlet of log-huts clustering round the primitive hostelry. Clouds of white vapour veil the water, and the slanting sunbeams deepen the pink and scarlet maple-trees into hectic brilliancy. Through tangled vines and across broken rocks we make our slow progress, guided by the distant music of the foaming cataract which dashes over black reefs forming a bar across the river, no longer navigable except by canoes carried across the "portage" according to Indian custom, and launched again beyond the tossing breakers.

A stiff climb up slippery boulders discloses a score of natural wells, excavated by the action of fire, water, or ice, in some prehistoric age, but we fail to obtain definite information from the non-scientific inhabitants of this primitive region. Our queries as to which of the great elementary forces produced the phenomena are sternly suppressed by the lanky youth who escorts us.

"I guess it don't much matter," is his contemptuous reply to our enquiry. "The wells is there, and what more do you want?"

After this severe rebuke to our unholy curiosity, we silently retrace our steps to the little inn, where a rustic feast of fish from the river and berries from the woods awaits us in the vine-covered verandah.

The lumber trade is in full swing during our downward course, and the steamer with difficulty threads the narrow channels between huge masses of floating timber which in spring render these waters impassable. Sometimes we jolt over a yielding raft, notwithstanding the execrations

of the lumberman, who with the aid of his steering pole springs to a place of safety on another heap of drifting logs, which creak and bend with the sudden impetus of his substantial weight as it almost submerges the slight construction. The lot of these lumbermen is one of toil and danger, but their strong arms and sturdy hearts are the pillars of many a thriving State, and the return of the back-woodsmen from the winter camp when the waters break their icy chain, and the first rafts float down on the brimming flood, wins a welcome warm as that which greets the sailor after a perilous voyage. The healthy freedom of a life cradled in the lap of Nature often gives an unconscious dignity to these rude settlers in the deep recesses of North-Western woods, which retain their primeval silence and repose in a continent which has become a synonym for social upheaval and perpetual unrest.

The Ste. Croix river was discovered and named by the devoted Jesuit missionaries who were the pioneers of Christian civilisation, planting the standard of the Cross on these unknown shores, and suffering untold hardships, torture, and even death in their noble efforts to bring the wandering Indians into the fold of the Church. The rapids which hasten the velocity of the impetuous river render it the principal "lumber-stream" of Minnesota. The buoyant atmosphere is an elixir of health, and the cheery songs of the lumbermen echoing through the frosty stillness add a bright touch of human life to the enchanting scenery. Amid the tumbled rocks of a romantic glen south of the Ste. Croix, the famous Falls of Minnehaha, the "Laughing Waters" of Indian folk-lore, gleam through the gnarled and knotted boughs of giant oaks. Here in the former "Land of the Dakotahs," Hiawatha, the mighty Indian chieftain, immortalised by the legends of all North-Western tribes, wooed and won the Arrowmaker's daughter, whose musical name was borrowed from the waterfall which blended its harmonious voice with every experience of her forest life in the wigwam on the torrent's brink. Indian traditions personify the forces of Nature to an extent which causes extreme difficulty in tracing any story to an authentic source. A complete narrative resembling a literal statement of actual events often proves a mere sequence of poetic images describing familiar scenery, or an attempt to translate the wandering voices of Nature into articulate language.

The facts of individual life are occasionally combined with mystic dreams or fancies, and a blending of reality with romance seems probable in the story of Minnehaha, who suggests herself to modern thought as the spirit of the waterfall, an Indian Undine, through whose waking soul the perpetual melody of the torrent speaks in varying tones.

Though legend and fact are alike profaned by an approach through a tea-garden—"more Americano"—incongruous surroundings cease at the wicket-gate opening into the rocky glen, where overhanging cliffs and leafy shadows exclude the glare of day. Through the green twilight of the branching oaks a path fringed with purple asters and plummy fern skirts the swift stream, which shoots smoothly over a granite precipice. Rockets of silver spray dart from the clear darkness of a gleaming flood, interlaced by ribbons of snowy foam. Shadow and sunshine flicker across the flashing fall from a tremulous screen of fluttering leaves, and a shimmering rainbow dances on a wreath of pearly mist tossed in mid-air by the wild mirth of the Laughing Water, as it leaps down the rocky ridge, and rushes headlong down the glen to lose itself among the dark shadows of the ferny glades. Though the spell of enchantment remains unbroken, all traces of Indian occupation have vanished from the spot consecrated by the beautiful love-story of the Algonquin chief and the daughter of the waterfall. In the dim depths of the darkening glen, the music of the fall growing fainter in the distance recalls the vague misgivings of Minnehaha's girlish heart, as she followed her Indian lover through the alumberous pine forests which separated the Arrowmaker's wigwam from the chieftain's lodge on the shores of "The Big Sea Water." Only when the song of the waterfall ceased to stir the natural regrets for the lost home of childhood, did the haunting fears of the unknown future die away, though after famine and fever had wreaked their cruel will upon the red man's bride, she heard the Falls of Minnehaha calling her once more ere she closed her eyes in death.

Whispering leaves tell their secrets to the rippling water; blue-bird and robin flutter in their nests, and twitter sleepily from the green heart of the solemn woods; but the soft stir of bird and branch only emphasizes the dreamy hush of the memory-haunted glen, and the swift-falling American night at length recalls us from

poetry to prose. As we ascend the rocky steps a tribe of youthful settlers encircles the English visitors to these Western wilds, and the eager curiosity displayed would suffice to celebrate an arrival from some unknown planet. Our ages, occupations, and social status are enquired into with exhaustive scrutiny; our ideas and motives are overhauled and commented on with startling candour; and after a run through the gamut of our very insignificant accomplishments, the severe young critics pounce upon a victim who has incautiously confessed to "playing the piano," and she is summarily escorted to an inner sanctum of a log cabin in the distance, where she evokes unearthly groans from a battered harmonium which has come to end its days with this irrepressible Western family. The little conversational and musical interlude is cut short by the arrival of the train which carries us to the starting-point of the Mississippi steamer, a two days' passage down the great river completing our experiences of Minnesota.

The atmosphere of gloom and mystery which surrounds the "Father of Waters," seems the only note of sadness amid the joyous life of these harvest lands. Though the first narrow reaches of the river sparkle between the grey rocks and branching oaks which diversify the undulating plains of wheat and maize, the dancing waters soon widen into a turbid flood flowing stealthily through woods of dull green cotton-trees along the swampy shores. Great turtles bask in the sun on steaming mud-banks which choke the sluggish current; blue mists of fever dim the green luxuriance of the rank vegetation which suggests decay rather than life. Pallid flowers gleam in the lush grass of the marshy undergrowth, where the black cypresses are strangled in the matted tendrils of Virginia creeper and wild grape-vine, which rope the pillared stems and mantle every bush of wild orange, laurel, and bay, with tangled sprays of green and crimson. Still bayous, black as night beneath heavy foliage and climbing parasites, pierce the green depths of malarial swamps, where stagnant pools, whitened with the marble cups of a world of water-lilies, vary the mournful monotony of the lonely river. Trailing mosses wave funeral garlands from forest trees, and pelicans wade in the still lagoons from whence the devious back-waters extend like a network in every direction.

The difficult navigation of the dangerous

river is successfully accomplished by the pilot immortalised in the pages of Mark Twain, an honour which seems to have made but a slight impression on the rugged personality of this North-Western celebrity, a sturdy backwoodsman, with red beard, shrewd grey eyes, and laconic speech.

Numerous Indian traditions and ghostly legends of early French settlers cling to the haunted shores of the mysterious Mississippi. The native dread of the terrible fever which lurks in the rich vegetation of the swamps, finds a poetical expression in the beautiful myth of Lillinau, the Indian maiden wooed by a phantom, who whispered through the evening breeze as it moaned among the pines of her father's lodge in the hush of twilight. Powerless to resist her lover's voice, Lillinau rose from her couch of birchen boughs and followed him into the mazy woods, guided by the waving green plume which was the only visible sign of his presence. Never again did the lost girl return to her tribe, who mourned her as one lured to her destruction by the magic spell of the fatal forest.

The origin of the legend is evident—the balmy breath of the flower-laden air mingling with the aroma of the pines, the green boughs waving in the wind with beckoning arms, and the Indian girl, with her untutored fancy and innate longings for the free forest life, unable to withstand these influences of Nature, which proved stronger than the ties of kindred. As the moon rises above the black walls of cypress, and the tremulous rays gleam whitely on the pools beneath the moss-wreathed boughs, the old French legend which peoples the scene with ghosts of unchristened children fitting round the shore on moonlit nights, also finds a natural solution. The solitary lives of the early settlers rendered them especially sensitive to the aspects and voices of Nature, which reached them with an intensity unmodified by any influences from the outside world of men.

As the deepening hush of night falls over the river, the multitudinous life of the forest awakes from sleep. Owls hoot from the tall tree-tops, snakes rustle through the long grass, and stealthy feet glide through the mysterious pathways between bush and brier. Wings flutter amid the whispering leaves, and a melancholy howl followed by a frightened cry suggests that some beast of prey has fallen into the clutches of a foe.

The oppressive gloom of the scenery renders the termination of the little voyage a welcome relief as the steamer anchors under the lee of a tall grey cliff, and we look back for the last time on the mighty river which has borne us away from the radiant woods and sunlit waterfalls, the blue lakes and golden corn-fields of fair and fertile Minnesota.

#### NOCTURNE.

TENDER touches of twilight are over the evening skies,  
And the lingering glow in the west is waning;  
The primrose pale,  
As the rose-red blush on the ripple of cloud flushes  
Fainter and dies,  
And the lilac mists are weaving the woof of the  
Young night's bridal veil.  
For the eyes of the stars look down in a liquid  
Languor of love,  
And the murmur of earth is hushed in a rapture of  
Breathless bliss,  
As the stillness below is overflowed by the luminous  
Stillness above.  
And heaven and earth are melted in one, in the  
Long-drawn twilight kiss.

#### A FROSTY FLIRTATION.

##### A COMPLETE STORY.

QUEBEC was smothered in snow. Two feet deep it rested on the high slanting roofs, from which the gabled windows peered out like the eyes of snowy owls blinking at the sunshine. Along the steep streets of the Upper Town a narrow path was dug out next the houses, but driving in the middle of the road up and down over the drifts one could catch glimpses of interiors through the second storey windows.

"There will be good sleighing for Christmas," observed my sister Bessie, as we two picked our steps down slippery Fabrique into narrow, sociable John Street, where the surplus snow was being carted away with true Canadian deliberation.

"Yes," I replied. "And tobogganing, too. We do not often have it so early in the season."

"I've been so long abroad in the balmy air of Ontario that I'd forgotten what your climate was like down here."

"That's the result of spending your Christmas holidays always with school friends, instead of coming home; but now that you are here for good, you'll have to be resigned to losing sight of the plank side-walks one half of the year."

"They are not so beautiful at any time that I pine to see them," laughed Bessie, "while the snow is lovely. Just look at that drift!"

The miniature Alpine range which blocked one of the side streets, was made doubly interesting at that moment by the attempt of a good-looking young man to rescue his hat from one of the hollows, without venturing boldly into the chilly mass. The keen wind rumbled his hair and blew the cape of his overcoat above his head, but he preserved his equanimity, and finally captured the truant on the end of his stick.

"Who is he?" asked my young sister, making an excuse to pause and look in the corner shop-window, though it was no day for standing. "Not a Quebecker, certainly, or he would not be wearing a stiff hat in December."

"Do come on," I said sharply. "One would think you'd never seen a strange man in town before."

"Neither I have, at this time of year," she replied, as we hurried forward. "And you cannot deny that young men are always a rare and highly-valued commodity in this part of the globe, for there isn't one who would stay here if he had enough enterprise to go anywhere else."

This was meant to be a severe hit at me, because I happen to be engaged to one of the said unenterprising youths, and, as in duty bound, I retorted:

"No wonder young men will not stay in Quebec, where there is no chance for any but Frenchmen. They have the advantage in everything."

"And why shouldn't they?" cried Bess, contradictory as usual. "They are in the majority here, and nowhere else in the Dominion, and they are just the brake we need on our wheels. Had it not been for them we'd have rolled over into Yankee-doodledom long ago. And see how picturesque they are!"

And, indeed, the scene which met us when we passed through St. John's Gate might have formed a subject for Gustave Doré. The market-slope was crowded with steaming men and horses, sleds filled with frozen meat, vegetables carefully covered with quilts. The stinging air and bright sunshine acted like an intoxicant upon the people, and it was not without difficulty, though they were politeness itself, that we pushed our way through the voluble, gesticulating groups to the market building.

Our purchases made, we returned by the St. Louis Gate, past the Esplanade, already lively with children sliding down the steep bank next the ramparts, and into

St. Louis Street, bordered by high stone dwellings close on the street.

"So different from the cheerful red-brick galleries and gardens of Toronto," Bessie said.

Our house is in one of the many irregular rows whose roofs might serve as stairs up to Cape Diamond. It would not take a great stride to cross the streets as well, stepping from one tinued roof to another.

Like all the rest, number thirty-six is plain and bare outside, especially in winter when the double door is on, and the shutters are exchanged for double windows; but indoors there was the essence of comfort that blustering afternoon. Bessie and I sat before the grate fire, hard at work over some embroidery which we wished to finish before Christmas, then only a few weeks distant. I can never talk when I am sewing, but Bessie's fingers flew no faster than her tongue, as she discoursed on the delights of the ball at the Citadel the night before, with whom she had danced, and what each partner had said to her and she to him. Sisters are proverbially unappreciative, but I could not help noticing what a pretty picture she made, sitting in that low chair, with the bright silks in her lap lighting up her dark red cashmere. Her cheeks were flushed with bending over her work, and the flame of the fire drew sparkles from her brown eyes, and showed streaks of gold in the dark Pompadour puff of hair above her forehead. I could quite understand how it was that she had been the belle of Murray Bay last summer, and how during this, her first winter at home from school, she had captivated the few eligible young men in Quebec. Her lips curled mischievously away from the shining regular teeth as she remarked to me:

"And that ridiculous Alf Stephens! I wish you had seen how he positively sulked, because I would not give him more than one waltz. But Captain Bouchard is simply charming, my dear. He and I——"

I had barely time to put out of sight the handkerchief on which I was working his initials, when the door opened to admit my young man—the only one I ever had, or desire to have—and towering behind him came the hero of the snow-drift, whom he introduced as a second cousin from England. Bess was demureness itself in a moment, and our new acquaintance bade fair to be an exception to the general rule, for he took little notice of

her, seemed to consider her merely a schoolgirl, and addressed most of his remarks to me. Bessie talked to my Jack, and after they had gone she said:

"What do you suppose that la-de-dah is out here for?"

"If you mean Mr. Lowndes," I replied severely, "I'm sure I don't know."

"He is going to write a series of articles for an English magazine on Canadian life and manners, if you please."

"Well, are you hoping he'll put you in?"

"Not exactly. I am far beneath the notice of the Lord High Executioner. You are far more likely to be on the little list, Kate—second-cousin-in-law elect!"

"Nonsense! I believe Jack was cramming you!"

"He doesn't try that with me, Katy dear. Perhaps he was not in earnest either when he proposed that we should get up a sliding party for to-morrow night to initiate our fair friend."

Fair he certainly was, and fairer still he looked in a borrowed white blanket suit when he and Jack called for us the next evening. The devoted Alf Stephens turned up, too, to escort Bessie, and Mr. Lowndes fell to the lot of Miss Burton, almost as tall as himself and a decided Anglo-maniac.

As usual some youngsters invited themselves to be of the party, and going out Louis Street, they found amusement in rattling the toboggans this way and that over the hard trodden snow, trying to trip up some unwary urchin.

Miss Burton did not see why people let so many wretched boys come sliding with them, and Mr. Lowndes also confessed to imperfect vision in that particular.

"Just as if he'd never been a boy himself!" exclaimed Bess indignantly, and she tore ahead of Mr. Stephens to join the juveniles in a snow skirmish. Truly, my sister's young-ladyism is put on but thinly as yet.

A bright moonlight night is sure to bring plenty of sliders to the Cove fields, and by the time we reached them there was a steady stream of toboggans careering down the long uneven slope. Jack's is a large, hospitable one, and for the first slide, Mr. Lowndes, Bess, and I tucked ourselves upon it, while Jack steered with a foot out behind.

Mr. Lowndes said it reminded him of sailing with a stiff breeze. Now we are in a trough of the sea, now up again over the crest of a wave, now catching our breath as we dive down a steep place,

and letting it go again as we glide over more even surface. The frozen spray flies up in our faces as we breast these snow-white billows, but the level haven is reached at last, our gallant pilot having steered us safely past that most dangerous of reefs—a board fence.

The length of the ascent depends entirely upon the companion. Bessie did not appear to find it tedious, though she chanced to be next to Mr. Lowndes. Jack and I were in front, and heard what they said.

"Is it true," she asked, "that you have come out here to take notes upon our habits and manners, so that you may write about them when you go home?"

"Who has been so kind as to enlighten you concerning my intentions, Miss Garland?" he replied, rather stiffly, I thought.

"Oh! Isn't that what all talented young Englishmen cross the ocean for? They cannot find sufficient food for their gigantic intellects at home."

"You have been misinformed, I assure you," and then he said something about the "heir of all the ages" which I did not catch, but only too well did I hear my pert sister's reply.

"Yes, I think that will do very nicely, Mr. Lowndes—not exactly for an opening sentence, you know, but a little way on. And you must be sure to mention in a foot-note for the benefit of Canadian readers—for of course your articles will be in great demand out here—that the gentleman Tennyson quoted above is at present poet laureate of England."

"That will hardly be necessary, I fancy. Even the schoolgirls seem to be remarkably well-informed."

"Alas! they are the only learned class among us; but your book may perhaps be too light for them. It is we older people who need relaxation in our leisure——"

"Suppose, then, we relax a little now by taking a slide together!"

"Can you steer?"

"I think so. Your young brother Jim gave me some private lessons this morning, and I think at the present moment he prefers a sled which goes faster, so I'll borrow his toboggan."

Jim's toboggan is a narrow one, and holds only two, so that Mr. Lowndes had an excuse for asking but one young lady to go down with him, but Bessie had no excuse for constantly being that one young lady. Though Alf Stephens had brought her there, she did not grace his toboggan

once, nor did she slide with one of her other friends, having eyes and ears for the Englishman alone.

It was maddening to have to tear ourselves away just when the moon was at its height, and the scene like fairyland, but Miss Burton expected us at her home for cake and coffee. There Mr. Lowndes and Bessie found a sofa as limited in dimensions as Jim's toboggan, but I took care to hover near and catch the drift of their conversation, in case my young sister should be going too far.

"Do you really think so?" she was saying, gazing up at him apparently with all her soul in her eyes.

"I do indeed," he said, equally earnest.

"But the style——"

"Thank goodness!" I said to myself. "She is on a literary top'c." But I was undeceived.

"What's style?" he replied. "Colour is everything! That blue blanket suit looks simply nowhere beside your adorable red one."

"They're getting on," thought I. "Poor young man! What a shame it will be if he takes a broken heart back to England with him along with his notes on Canada!"

During the next fortnight we had Mr. Lowndes for breakfast, Mr. Lowndes for dinner, Mr. Lowndes for tea. When he was not with us in the flesh Bessie talked incessantly about him, giving us the benefit of their conversations. But two or three days before Christmas there came a sudden change in the wind. Jack's cousin came to take her driving to Lorette. She refused to go. He expected to meet her at the rink. She was not there—Bessie, who was never known to miss a band night all the winter! Her avoidance of him became as marked as her preference had been.

On Sunday morning he joined us as we were taking our customary promenade on the Terrace after church. If there had been any breeze it would have been bitterly cold, for the thermometer stood at twenty degrees below zero; but the air was perfectly still, and we sunned ourselves on the narrow path cleared next the railing. As we walked along facing the Citadel we could not see over the high bank of snow on our right, but to the left we had glimpses of the roofs of Lower Town in their spotless winter headgear. There was not room for more than two to walk abreast, so Jack fell back with me, and Mr. Lowndes joined Bessie in front.

"Isn't it amusing to see Bess on her

dignity?" said Mr. Cowan to me. "Look how extremely amiable she is!"

"I am so sorry, Jack, that something has come between her and your cousin, for he is an exceedingly nice young fellow, and I never knew her to go so steadily with any one young man before."

"No, she generally likes to have three or four on a string."

"He is really above the average, though, and I used to think his very imperturbability attracted her."

"And I suppose, like all engaged girls, you had turned matchmaker, and were wondering how it would feel to have a married sister living in England."

"Kate," called Bessie from the central kiosk, "do come here a minute and enjoy the view. It is better than all the sermons in the world. Do you suppose the ice-bridge is going to take?"

"I am afraid it has taken," remarked Mr. Lowndes enigmatically, as he turned to me, while Bess walked over to the railing and gazed down at Mont Ste. Anne and the fine line of hills to the left of it, as if she had never seen them before.

"I hope, Mr. Lowndes," said I, "that you will put in a good word for poor old Quebec in your papers. Upper Canadians and Montreallers speak contemptuously of it as a dead-alive sort of place, and the American tourists treat it as a kind of old curiosity shop."

"I think I am fully alive to the attractions of your city," he replied in an absent kind of way, gazing over at Bessie. "What's the matter with her?"

"Oh, nothing! It is just one of her freaks to appear injured. I should pay no attention to it, if I were you."

But it was difficult for the most gentlemanly man to remain passive when her animosity took a more active turn. At a dance on the Monday night she carried on a desperate flirtation with one of the B Battery officers. I would have been satisfied had she continued to leave Mr. Lowndes severely alone, but that unfortunate young man could not open his lips in her hearing without being snubbed. Let us hope he attributed her eccentricities to her native climate, which exhibited all kinds of weather during the next few days. First came a thaw, and then a freeze, giving us brilliant hopes of skating on the river Christmas Day.

Tuesday the twenty-fourth, we were out at St. Matthew's Church, helping to decorate. Mr. Lowndes came too, and



worked with a will, but never a smile did he get from Bessie. I heard her reply to his offer to help her nail up some evergreens:

"No, thank you, Mr. Lowndes, I much prefer doing it myself. Canadian girls are independent, if they are not particularly ladylike."

He looked puzzled, but said nothing. In the evening we took a turn down town to see the stores lighted up, and the crowds doing their Christmas shopping. It was a lovely night when we started, but a regular blizzard set in before long and blew us home. There we found Mr. Lowndes, who said he had come to say "Good-bye."

"Going away on Christmas Eve," I cried. "That is dreadful! Can you not stay till the end of the week?"

"Sorry, but I have to meet some friends who will be arriving out from England."

"But the steamer is never in before Sunday at this season."

"Not often, but it is the 'Parisian' this week, and she may be earlier. Besides, I'd like to have a day or two in Halifax before they come."

He rose to go.

"We shall miss you so much," said I, turning to Bessie, who did not unbend in the least.

"Pleased to have met you, Mr. Lowndes," she said in her iciest tones. "And I hope your impressions will be as favourable everywhere you go."

"I do not expect to take on any deeper ones," he replied, smiling down at her, while her face remained as rigid as the picture of any saint in the Basilica.

"When do you start?" I enquired.

"I thought of crossing to Point Levis to-night, and taking the train for Halifax in the morning."

"To-night!" I exclaimed. "You can't get across to-night. The ice-bridge has only just taken, and the Grand Trunk Ferry will not break it up till to-morrow."

"All the more reason I should go now, if I can get a carter to risk it. I have a great desire to cross the river on the ice."

"It is nonsense to talk of driving over. That would not be possible for a week yet, even if the Ferry stopped running—and have you any idea what a storm is on?"

"Why don't you walk across?" said Bess, striking in. "If you are in such a hurry to shake the snow of Quebec off your feet, that will be the surest way."

"Indeed, Miss Bessie, to tell the truth,

I am most anxious to skate over, and therefore sent my luggage across this morning."

"Well, you will surely not let a little snow stop you."

"Bessie!" I cried, "how ridiculous you are! Just see what a storm there is."

I went to the window and peered into the night. The electric light showed the flakes driving swiftly past into the darkness. When I turned round, Mr. Lowndes was standing close to Bess, who with blazing cheeks and eyes had taken up a defiant attitude upon the hearth-rug. For once the Englishman's serenity seemed slightly ruffled, but evidently he made no impression on my sister, for he was saying:

"Well, I'll risk it, since you——"

He broke off suddenly, and with a hurried farewell to me, in three minutes he was out of the house, and I was upstairs shaking Bessie. It took me some time to shake the truth out of her, but it came at last.

"Do you remember that day we drove to the Falls?"

"Yes, you went with Mr. Lowndes, and slid with no one else all afternoon."

"I didn't do it any more."

"And why, pray?"

"Just as we were leaving the hotel I found a half-sheet of scribbling-paper filled with writing in pencil. I knew in a minute it was some of his notes, and I thought I'd get hold of a sentence or two just to tease him about, so I kept the paper and read it when I came home."

"A very honourable proceeding, I must say."

"Now, don't interrupt me, Kate. Wait till I tell you what he said. There was a little about Canadian scenery, and then he went on to speak of the people. He said the 'girls' were not at all stiff and proper, like English young ladies, but very easy to get acquainted with, and very kind indeed to stray Englishmen. He could guarantee any of his countrymen a hearty welcome out here, for the 'girls' entirely looked down upon the native youths whenever a stranger appeared. Then there was something about our free-and-easy manners, which he said were very nice for a change, though, of course, they would not be tolerated for an hour in England. Now, considering that I am the only Canadian girl he has seen much of, don't you think I have reason to be angry?"

"Perhaps, but after all there is some truth——"

"That's enough, Kate. I might have known I'd get no sympathy from you. That is why I did not show you the wretched thing."

Here my young sister, being considerably wrought up, ended the discussion in the orthodox fashion by "bursting into tears."

A ring at the door-bell, late as it was.

"Where's Lowndes?" I heard from Jack's voice in the hall, and I called over the stair.

"He said he was going to skate over to Point Levis to-night. Do you suppose he'd do it?"

"Not unless he's crazy. The ice-bridge is sure to go before morning. I'll go and look him up, and come back and tell you if he's all right. Bessie is anxious, I've no doubt."

Jack did not come back, and true enough Bessie did grow anxious. She could not sleep, but lay tossing about, saying at intervals:

"Do you think he really cared for what I said? Do you think he would go on the river to-night?"

When daylight came, I climbed to our attic window, from which we can see the river, and sure enough there was the dark green running water bearing down masses of floating ice on its surface.

Bessie and I could not look at each other during breakfast. It was not a "Merry Christmas" for us, but we went off to church, and exchanged greetings mechanically with our friends after service.

"Too bad the ice didn't hold," said Miss Burton. "We had planned to go skating this afternoon."

"It would hardly have been safe, anyway," said I, glancing over the people coming out, and wondering what in the world had become of Jack.

"I saw some boys on it yesterday," remarked Alf Stephens.

"Did you?" cried Bess, overwhelming the young man with so sudden an interest in anything he had to say. "Then perhaps it was safe to cross."

"Hardly; I noticed that they kept pretty close to shore."

The brightness died out of Bessie's face again. Seldom had the walk home seemed so long, though we made great haste, for I said:

"Surely Jack will be there."

But he was not, and Jim, being despatched to his boarding-house, brought back word that he had not been seen there since the previous afternoon. Jim had a

newspaper, too, which he tried to shove farther out of sight in his jacket-pocket, but Bessie detected him and captured the sheet. It was a French one, but this is the English of what stared us in the face:

#### "FROZEN TO DEATH.

"It is greatly feared that a foolhardy young Englishman who tried to cross to Point Levis last night, on foot, was carried down by the ice-bridge, which broke up at the turn of the tide, about midnight. He has not been heard of at the Grand Trunk Dépôt, where his baggage was checked to go by the morning train, so that he could not have got across before the river opened."

Bessie clutched my arm in terror.

"Oh, Kate, I can't believe it! He never would be so silly! Whatever shall I do, if it's true!"

I soothed her as well as I could, though there was a great fear at my own heart. Taunting words from one he loves are enough to make the wisest man foolish.

"But Jack——" I said. "What has become of Jack? He has gone to look after him, perhaps, and is afraid to come to tell us——"

"Right you are, Miss Katherine," said a familiar voice at the door, and in marched Jack Cowan, and behind him the Englishman, looking rather sheepish.

"Merry Christmas!" said John. "We heard of a notice in the paper, and so thought we'd better call early. What's the matter with Bess?" catching her hand as she tried to escape from the room.

"Neuralgia. Couldn't sleep for it," was her prompt reply.

"Then you didn't try to cross the river?" I managed to gasp.

"No," said Jack, who seemed to have constituted himself spokesman. "It was so cold and slippery going down Mountain Hill, that, like a sensible man, he changed his mind and turned back to the hotel. There I found him, and we had a smoke together, and got talking so that I forgot all about having promised to come back here. It was so late when we adjourned, that Lowndes persuaded me to turn in with him, and we over-slept ourselves this morning. I hear that my landlady has been circulating a report that I, too, must have been carried down by the ice."

"But the newspaper notice," said Jim, who felt responsible for his share in the excitement.

"Lowndes didn't take the carter into his confidence."

"What carter?"

"The one who took his luggage over, sonny. He told him he was going to skate across, and forgot to notify him that he had changed his mind. One of that carter's fourteen brothers is a newspaper reporter. See it?"

Meanwhile, Bessie was handing to Mr. Lowndes a closely written scrap of paper, saying:

"I think this belongs to you."

"Indeed, it does not, Miss Bessie."

"Why, I thought it was some of your notes."

I hardly recognised her voice, it was so meek.

"Notes for what?"

"The articles you are writing, of course."

"I never wrote an article in my life, and I never intend to."

"But you said——"

"But you said, and it wasn't polite to contradict a lady."

"Jack, you rascal," I exclaimed, seizing him and the paper, and bearing them off into the back room, leaving Bess and Mr. Lowndes free to make an Anglo-Canadian compact. "That is your writing!"

"I'm not ashamed of it," said Mr. Cowan, smoothing his mousetache. "I thought it would be a good joke on Bess, and teach her not to be either too nice or too nasty to strangers in future."

When they were gone, Bessie came and sat at my feet on the stool, gazing into the fire, and smiling to herself.

"Well," said I, "when is Mr. Lowndes coming back?"

"How should I know?"

"Don't be stupid, dear, but confide in me."

"I haven't anything to confide. Whether Mr. Lowndes comes back at all or not will depend, I should say, upon Mrs. Lowndes."

"His mother?"

"No, his wife. These people whom he is going to meet at Halifax are the girl he is engaged to and her father. The marriage is to take place at once."

"My poor Bessie! How long have you known this?"

"Why, Jack told me the first day he brought him to call, and Mr. Lowndes has talked to me a great deal about the young lady. I thought it would be no fun if you knew too."

Just wait till I see that Jack Cowan!

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER X.

It was the end of January. Leila and Dolores, no longer confined to the grounds, were able to go for walks and drives. After the severe weather, a sudden thaw set in, and it was possible to make long excursions into the surrounding country. Leila, still treated with every consideration, had her own horse to ride, and she and Dolores had many a good scamper across the country. But for one drawback they were always happier out of doors. Dolores, so familiar had they become, scarcely noticed them now: except occasionally to lament the want of society of children of her own age, whom they met when out walking or driving: but Leila had not yet grown accustomed to the rude stares of curiosity or the blank gaze of cold ignoring, which met them wherever they went. But there was always Dolores and that beloved invalid, who wrote with such tender gratitude of the help Leila sent her out of her handsome salary.

One day she met an old acquaintance. It was none other than the kindly station-master.

He looked depressed and worried, but his face brightened as she stopped to speak to him. They had a little talk, during which a piece of information came out which brought the prettiest colour in the world to Leila's cheek, and filled her with mingled happiness and dismay. The station-master betrayed the real truth of the tea at the station.

"And Dr. Barton cut the cake and bread-and-butter with his own hands, and my missus has often laughed since at the way he walked off with that big basket, and how particular he was you should have everything of the very nicest and best. He would have one of the best tea-cups. But he's always a kind gentleman; it's a pity more ain't like him," with a heavy sigh. And then, full of his disappointment, he told her how he had just come from Moorlands, where he had been to see Hesketh Anson about the farm his nephew was to have had, and how Hesketh Anson had let it to another man, because he could pay a higher rent and put more money into it.

"But he's that hard and grasping, Mr. Hesketh Anson," he said. "His brother is a different sort; but he leaves every-

thing in the hands of Mr. Heaketh, and he drives many a hard bargain. And they do say that Mrs. Anson lets the money run through her fingers like water, dressing up as she does—and no use neither, seeing no one ever sees her—but perhaps that's the only pleasure she has," bitterly. "They say she thinks of nothing else."

Leila could not forget that little act of kindness on Dr. Burton's part. She and Dolores often met him when they were out, and he always stopped to speak to them. His practice, which was still but a poor and struggling one, was widely scattered among the poorer people of the sparsely inhabited neighbourhood. As yet, there seemed little prospect of his attaining to a county practice, though those who said it most emphatically scarcely knew the young man. Heaketh Anson never attempted to warn her against his acquaintance.

Leila was unconscious herself, as yet, how much happiness and comfort this pleasant acquaintanceship brought into her isolated, friendless life at Moorlands. One afternoon, at the end of January, as she and Dolores were coming home from one of their long country rambles, they caught sight of Mr. Anson with his gun standing on the bank of the lake in the grounds. Neither Dolores nor Leila had seen anything of him for the past week. He had been ill, Martha briefly told Leila; who had learned by this time that, for all their kindly geniality, the negro servants would oppose the blankest taciturnity to any question concerning the family. She noticed, too, that no matter how expansively they chattered to her in their communicative moods, they never by a single chance alluded to any life previous to that they had spent during the last few years in England. How much they knew of the family's past history she never discovered.

Dolores, on catching sight of him, gave a joyous cry and dashed forward. Mr. Anson stooped and kissed Dolores as she ran up to him, and then straightened himself and stared at Leila, a queer smile on his face. She stopped involuntarily. His face was pale, and there was something strange in his smile and the glitter in his eyes.

"Don't move, Miss Mallet," he shouted, "there is a horrible black thing crawling about you. It followed us from Chili all across the sea! A great slimy snake creature. I can see its tongue quivering

in and out, and yet a moment ago it was only a dry piece of wood. But the devil got into it—the black fellows know how it's done—and it will dart at you in a moment, as it darted at a man before. But I'll kill it this time. I'll not be tortured to death in expiation of your life too. Besides, there's no reason for putting you out of our way. Ah! it's getting ready to strike. Stand steady. I'll fire the instant I can get aim. There are hundreds more coming on. Hark how they are rustling among the bushes. Keep still!" He levelled his gun at her. Dolores shrieked, and as Mr. Anson fired a man sprang out from the bushes behind him, striking up the gun, and the bullet hurtled harmlessly just above Leila's head. It was Dr. Burton.

"You madman!" he exclaimed, "another second, and you would have had a second murder on your soul!"

Anson stared stupidly at him, then his eyes blazed into fury.

"D——n you! What do you mean, you crawling, prying sneak?—but if you think you are going to get blackmail——"

"Give me your gun!" said the doctor sternly, looking into Anson's eyes.

Their fury died away under the steady gaze, and Anson slowly yielded up the gun, though an ugly look still lingered on his face. It vanished into an abject, pitiful shame as Dolores, who with Leila had stood white and speechless, caught his hand.

"Oh, what is the matter? Father! are you ill?" clinging to him in terror.

"Ill!" said the doctor, with savage contempt; "he's drunk—dead drunk—as he mostly is. Good Heavens!" turning to Leila, "another second, and the brute would have murdered you. It is delirium tremens, and a bad case at that! Take that child away—your life isn't safe. I'll look after him."

Leila obeyed. She gently drew the child away from her father, who with a dulled, stupid look of misery on his face, stood caressing her hand.

Dolores went without a word. Glancing down at her, Leila was shocked at her pale, stricken face. The real cause of her father's illness was made known to her.

"Ob, Miss Mallet!" The frozen stillness broke into speech at last. "It can't be true! It is so wicked to be that—what Dr. Burton says. Miss Stace, my last governess, told me that people who did that went straight to that place she was so

fond of talking about—perhaps she knew father— Oh, father, I can't bear it!" She broke into a storm of weeping. The feet of her beloved were of clay. Lella wished that it had been any one else than Dr. Burton who had broken the news to her, and for the first time she felt a touch of genuine sympathy with the rest of the family, who had tried so tenderly to spare the child the knowledge. And the feeling was deepened by a visit she received from Hesketh Anson that evening after Dolores had gone to bed. It faintly softened even the prejudice she had against him personally, and allowed her to see that that stern-faced young man might have troubles of his own under his uncompromising hardness of self-repression.

Though it was past the usual dinner-hour, he was still in his morning clothes. Probably he had been attending on his brother. He looked thoroughly worn out, and his face seemed to have grown years older. Even she could not doubt the sincerity of his feeling, when he expressed his horror and regret for the peril in which she had been placed.

"My brother is a confirmed drunkard. He has been getting steadily worse, and we have had great difficulty in keeping him within bounds. For the child's sake"—then with a fierce note—"And but for that brute Burton—I beg your pardon, I forgot he was a friend of yours." But there was no sneer in the words. He looked almost as if he were sorry for her. "She, as you know, adores her father, and takes things so much to heart, that we were afraid to let her know the truth. But I suppose," relapsing into wearied listlessness, "it would have had to come out sooner or later; everything is bound to. It's not much use fighting it any longer." He rose. "It's a sinking ship, Miss Mallet," he said, with a slight smile of intense bitterness. "You had better have taken my advice, and left it."

She went the last thing that night to see how Dolores was. As she passed the head of the staircase leading from the long corridor down into the hall on her way back to her rooms, she saw Dr. Burton and Hesketh Anson talking together. The two men had apparently just come out of the library, which opened into the hall near the foot of the staircase. In the brilliance of the light that fell from the lamps rising out of the balustrade at the foot of the stairs, the young men's faces were distinctly visible.

They were both very pale, Dr. Burton's wearing a look she could not understand. That on Hesketh Anson's was one so full of hate and anger, that her heart was afraid for the sake of the man who had brought it there.

"You have my answer! Do your worst. You've tracked down our secret, but you have outwitted yourself. The game's up as far as we are concerned. As you know so much, you may as well know a little more. There are others greedily watching for this opportunity. It is they who will benefit, not you, by your discovery. My brother's fortune depends entirely on the secret being kept. Make it public, and the fortune passes into the hands of those who have been patiently watching and waiting for years, for the exposure that was bound to come sooner or later."

"Mr. Anson," the doctor tried to speak quietly, "for your own sakes, listen to reason."

Lella heard no more as she hurried on to her own room, puzzled and sick at heart. What had Dr. Burton to do with the black mystery that seemed to hang over the lives of the occupants of Moorlands?

What was he doing here at this time of night? The great clock in the hall struck out midnight. Then she remembered Mr. Anson. He was probably here in attendance on him, and her heart gave a leap of thankfulness that his protecting presence was so near her. She took off her dress, and slipped on her dressing-gown. She could not go to bed. Nobody seemed to want her services, Martha would not even let her go in to speak to Dolores, and yet she could not help feeling a terrified expectancy that at any moment she might be drawn into the vortex of some dark and dreadful tragedy.

But there was nothing on the surface to suggest such a thought.

The house was perfectly still. The lights were out. Some one had come and put them out in the corridors and passages after she had returned to her room. The silence was almost oppressive. It was a relief to rise at moments from her chair, where she sat by the fire, trying to read, and make a little stir through the death-like stillness. Once she fancied she caught the sound of a horse on the gravelled path beyond the lawn and shrubbery which lay under her window. She rose, and peered out into the darkness, but

could see nothing. She wondered if Mr. Anson were worse, and if they had had to send again for the doctor; or perhaps it was Dr. Burton only just going away. She went back to her seat, feeling lonelier than ever as this possibility struck her. How good he had always shown himself to her! She would have been ashamed to have told any one how often her thoughts went back to that boisterous snowy afternoon in the station, and to the kindly, chivalrous service, prosaic in shape though it was, which he had rendered her, a friendless stranger.

The chimes of the clock played out the hour of two.

She faced her bedroom door, as she sat by her fireside. It was closed, but as the last silvery chimes died away once more into silence, it began stealthily to open.

The long, snaky fingers of a hand curled round the edge of the door, drawing it wide open, and there, against the dark background of the room beyond, stood—the Grey Boy who had haunted the family of the man who had done him so foul a wrong in life! The boy with the horrible hand who had travelled with her in the train, and who had disappeared so strangely at the moment of peril! Or the embodiment of that mystery and fear which seemed to dog the footsteps of the family who now inhabited Moorlands! She sat staring at the creature, scarcely daring to draw her breath.

The boy, in his modern commonplace of everyday dress, with the gruesome fantasy of the charnel-house clinging about it, with his pale, heavy face, and eyes blinking at her as if dazzled by the blaze of light by which she had surrounded herself, his hands—those crawling, murderous hands, with their long, fine fingers—thrust in horrible travesty of boyish fashion in his pockets, stood peering at her; and as he stood there, the same unspeakable dread and loathing fell on her which had touched her once before in the train, and now it was scarcely personal fear, but unutterable horror and repulsion, as if the shadow of some deadly, devilish sin had touched her.

And as she looked into the face that was the face of a boy, but old with an unspeakable wickedness which dated from the days of Cain, it seemed to her as if it took upon it a hideous likeness to the beautiful Mrs. Anson.

Then, with that look of dulled malignity, as if baffled once more by the light that fell about her, the Grey Boy turned away,

and gliding back into the bedroom, drew to the door noiselessly after him.

For a second or two she sat there, unable to stir hand or foot.

Then she sprang up, and catching up a candle from the mantelshelf, she fled out of the room, down the passage leading from the wing with its horrible ghosts of dead and evil things, never stopping till she came out on to the long corridor.

The long corridor, except for the feeble glimmer of her candle about her, lay dark from end to end. All the best bedrooms of the house opened on to it. At the farthest extremity there was an archway, similar to the one by which she had just come, beyond which again passages branched off right and left. She had been once or twice in the right wing of the house, but it was almost entirely unoccupied, Washington and Hezekiah alone occupying rooms in it.

She hurried on to the room occupied by Dolores. Martha always slept in a little ante-chamber leading into it, the child's room again opening into her mother's. The thought flashed through Leila's mind as she cautiously opened the door, how well guarded she always was. The ante-chamber, in which a lamp burned, was empty; a glance at Martha's bed showed that it had not been slept in. She was probably in the farther room. She passed on and entered it. That too was empty. The bedclothes were tossed back, the child's clothes were neatly folded on a chair near, the little shoes stood by the bedside. But Dolores was not there.

Her mother's bedroom was closed and locked, nor was there any answer when she knocked and called, first softly, then more loudly, driven by a desperate desire for the sound of a human voice.

There was only a faint moaning of wind in reply, as if the windows of an empty room stood open to the night air. She went out into the long corridor again, and came face to face with Hesketh Anson. He stared at her as if she were a spirit, in her white wrapper, the candle-light flickering in her wide, frightened eyes.

"Miss Mallet!" Then, with a note of gentlest tenderness: "Why are you up at this hour? There is no need for you to watch in this God-forsaken house!"

"Dolores—where are they all? Dolores isn't in there!"

He scarcely seemed to understand her. He stood looking down at her with the saddest eyes she had ever seen, and in her

dread and excitement she laid her hand on his arm.

"The Grey Boy! He came to my room a few moments ago—and I came to warn them—and there is no one here!"

"Good Heavens!" He seemed to understand at last. "He has been near you again—and Dolores—not here! She has gone to look for her father. And that creature, she might meet him——"

He turned and ran off in the direction of the unused wing. Leila followed him through the archway to the passage beyond. This passage led to a gallery which ran round a second and smaller hall below. Down there, a faint light radiating from a small lamp, which had been set down on one of the lower steps of the staircase, illuminated the darkness. A door leading into the grounds stood open. In the centre of the hall, touched by the uncertain light of the lamp which flickered in the chill current of air that swept in from the open door, and fluttered the child's white nightdress against her little bare feet, stood Dolores. Her face, turned towards the open doorway, was alight with a very passion of love and pitiful, yearning tenderness.

Her father, who seemed to have just come in from the garden, stood there looking back at her.

"Father! Father!" Dolores sprang forward, passing out of the radiance of the

light into the dark shadow in which her father stood.

The two looking down on the scene from the gallery above, had never anything but a confused sense of the scene that followed. As the child ran forward, a figure grey, indistinct, glided out from the deeper gloom of the background and seized her, with its cruel white fingers, round the throat, choking the loving cry into a stifled shriek.

At the same instant Anson flung up his hand, levelling a pistol at the murderous thing. There was one short, sharp crack, followed almost immediately by another, and Mr. Anson fell heavily to the ground, shot dead by his own hand; while the Thing, whatever it was, loosed its hold of Dolores, and staggered away back into the darkness.

Leila and Hesketh Anson, running up a second too late, caught the little white figure as it swayed to and fro, the livid marks of the creature's fingers on the fair round throat.

"I—came—to—tell—father—that—I—asked God in my prayers to-night——"

The faint voice failed, and Dolores lay lifeless on her uncle's breast. Her heart, always weak, had failed under the shock of that moment's anguish of terror.

Yet, so sweet was the smile that dawned on her dead face, that who could say her prayer for the salvation of her father was unanswered?

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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### THROUGH THE RANKS.

By MRS. LEITH-ADAMS.

(MRS. R. S. DE COUROY LAFFAN.)

Author of "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," "My Land of Beulah,"  
"Bonnie Kate," "The Peyton Romance," etc., etc.

#### CHAPTER XVIII. MOTHER AND SON.

LITTLE Missy had some very sad and important news to impart to her family; but if any one can imagine that young damsel looking shy, and uncertain of herself, that time was now. Her head was more on one side than usual, but in her eyes was a deprecating expression, and her silky curls hung low above them—evidently designedly. It would appear that little Missy had been what good Eliza called "rather naughty-naughty."

And on this wise.

Having seen fit to leave her copy for Elsie, the day before, unfinished, she also saw fit to scrawl across the empty lines, "sant do enny more." Elsie was cross. Missy wore a Madonna-like expression of patient suffering, and tried hard to twinkle a tear up into the violet eyes. Failing in this, she sought refuge in a change of subject.

"I'm so glad my off'cer-Sergeant isn't going to be deaded, aren't you, Sissy? 'Liza says the whole 'rig'ment'—yes, she calls it like that, you know—the whole 'rig'ment' is glad an' 'appy—that's what 'Liza says; and she says he's a gentleman-born. What sort of a gentleman is that, Sissy? Is it a nice kind of gentleman?"

But Elsie looked very grave, and not in the least interested in the "off'cer-Sergeant."

"Missy," she said, "you have been a very naughty girl."

"I'm 'fade I have," said Missy, with such a sigh that the bosom of her lace-edged pinafore was lifted right up to her dimpled chin. "It's very sad, isn't it, Sissy dear?"

"And you have been very rude," continued Sissy, wholly unappeased by the affecting attitude and expression of the penitent. "If you were tired, and didn't wish to do any more, you should have said, 'please excuse the rest,' and then I should not have been angry."

"That's all right," said Missy. "I shall know 'bout it another time, shan't I?"

The little episode passed and was forgotten—but not by little Missy.

It will now be understood that on the day following, little Missy was slightly uncertain as to the ground she stood upon in the family circle. She stood big with news as has already been stated, her hands clasped, her eyes visionary, at the door she had opened wide. Every one looked up.

"Meshech has gone and drowned his own self in a pail of water. He was as dead as dead when they founded him—deader than dead; and all his pretty face as wet as a sop, and lying straight out—poor little 'Bednego is sittin' with his little hank'chuff to his little nose—an' the tears are streamin' down his eyes—"

Then they cried out "Missy!" all together, and Missy knew that the day was won, and the sin of the night before condoned.

"Well," she said, with an ineffable toss of the head, "if he isn't crying for his poor little brother, he ought to be. Wouldn't you cry, Elsie dear, if I was drowned dead in a pail of water?"

Elsie could not but assent to this view of the question.

"Then I'm right, you see," said Missy, all "triumphant;" "an' look here now. Mr. Drummer says that Meshech's gone



to glory—is he gone to glory?" and the far-away-looking dreamy eyes seemed to be seeking for the place where glory might be found.

Before, however, this theological difficulty could be grappled with, little Missy was unceremoniously lifted off her feet from behind, and Dr. Musters carried her willy-nilly into the room, and set her down upon the hearth-rug.

There was a sort of glow upon the doctor's face, the light that comes after the battle has been fought and won. He crossed to where Mrs. Henneker was sitting by her knitting-basket winding wool, and took her white hand, snow-white wool and all, into his friendly clasp.

"For the first time, dear Mrs. Henneker," he said, his eyes glistening, "for the first time I think we may really say we are out of the wood."

"Do you mean that all danger is past?" said Mrs. Henneker, with a little tremble in her voice. The placid nature of this dear woman had been a very shield and covert from the tempest to those around her in these stormy days of trouble. Her sympathy was like some quiet, soothing strain of music—calming the trembling nerves, giving faith and trust in the hour when both were most sorely needed. To her troubled husband she had been everything; for great, in truth, had been his bewilderment and grief. To him, Alison was as dear as if she had been his own child. If he loved her as a daughter, he honoured her as a woman too. The horror of that moment when the doctor, tenderly, and with infinite delicacy, told him that the man who had been shot down, and was hovering on the confines of the grave, besought as a last earthly boon the presence of his young niece, could never be forgotten. Another woman, placed as Mrs. Henneker was, might have exclaimed and bewailed herself, made matters worse for all round her by the heat of her indignation, the fever of her curiosity. But Hugh Dennison had been in the right when he said that Mrs. Henneker was the best listener in the world. Her attention was always vivid, though silent, her eyes said more than many a woman's lips, and her smile was a revelation.

As now, when Dr. Musters assured her that the dark night of fear was past, the dawn of a certain hope had come at last, and Hubert Claverdon would live. As the last words left his lips, Elsie, leading little Missy by the hand, softly

left the room. She fumbled a moment with the latch of the door, for her eyes were blind with tears, and she had enough to do to keep back the sobs; tears of joy, sobs of wild and pleasurable excitement. It was only she who knew what the struggle had been for Alison; only she who had heard the stifled sobs, the agonising prayers put up to heaven in the darkness and silence of the night; only she who had witnessed that passionate wrestling with the angel of death, for the life of the beloved one, of which perhaps only women are capable. What a mockery it had seemed to Alison that they should come and tell her that the man she loved was this, was that, was the other! What did it matter, what did anything matter, if only he lived? Nothing could make him other than himself—himself as she had known him—strong and tender, chivalrous and reverent towards the woman who, in abject helplessness, had been thrown upon his protection.

What joy, then, for Elsie to carry to Alison the glorious news that death was worsted, life triumphant, and that Heaven's mercy had not failed them; that uncertainty had passed into assurance, that the hope that had flickered, here one day, gone the next, had now become as the still shining of the blessed sun! Not in many words, but just in a few brief, loving sentences, was the good news told; and then, as Alison sank forward on her knees, Elsie stole softly from the room.

Meanwhile, in the room below, Surgeon-Major Musters was talking away "like one o'clock," as he told his angel Amelia afterwards, to the "best listener in the world."

So great was his agitation and interest in the tale he had to tell, that he had to perambulate the room like an animal in its den. The glory and light of a victory was upon him; he had fought and he had conquered, the Lord being his helper, for the doctor was a simple and devout soul, carrying within his breast a thankful heart when Heaven had blessed his efforts. Until to-day things had been depressing. The sick man's temperature had run up; his pulse had followed suit; he had again taken to rambling in his talk; once, supposing himself to be at a Soldiers' Evening, sang one sweet, sad song all through so beautifully, that the men came creeping out of their wards, and huddled about the door to listen, Simmons presently dispersing them like a flock of frightened sheep. There had been no

Soldiers' Evening. Who could give any heed to such gatherings, when one man of the regiment lay hovering between death and life, and another lay under sentence of death? Their Sunday had by no means been a time of rest and refreshment, for the organ did dreadful things under Amelia's manipulations; the Chaplain broke down in his sermon when he tried to speak of the cloud that hung over them all as a community; and Gunner Grimes, exasperated at the villainous singing of the choir, had been heard to swear softly into his shaggy moustache, and been sharply reproved in consequence. Little worries always make a big anxiety worse to bear; perhaps suspense affects the general temper, and hence toleration is weakened for the time being. Anyway, the doctor took great shame to himself for being so aggravated by Amelia's peculiar style of playing, and an ornamental twirl on the part of Grimes that was really out of all reason in one of the responses. The truth was, his nerves were on the stretch and easily set vibrating. But they were better now, and no one will grudge him his happiness, well earned by days of anxiety and nights of watching.

"I have never lived through such a time before—never," he said. "The Crimea and Scutari weren't in it with this last few days. You see, you expected all sorts of trouble and worry then, and fought your fight as best you could, knowing things must go against you many times and oft—but to see that woman——"

The doctor stumbled over little Missy's stool, recovered himself, looked out of window, and blew his nose violently.

"You mean—Mr. Claverdon's mother?" said Mrs. Henneker.

"I do," said the doctor, facing round; "and I must say a more touching spectacle was never vouchsafed to the eyes of man. There have been times, Mrs. Henneker, when, as I have seen the light falling on her face, and I have read its agonising sorrow, its patient passion of waiting; when I have felt—bless me!" said the doctor, breaking off short in his sentence, "I don't know how I have felt, I don't indeed; and when she said to me: 'He is all I have, Dr. Musters, and can it be that he is given back to me like this only for me to lose him again?' why, I hadn't a word to say, I hadn't indeed."

"I am sure she understood," said Mrs. Henneker, with a smile. "Mothers have quick intuitions, you know."

"I tell you there never was such a woman," continued the doctor—"never! You know they wanted to move him—not suitable surroundings, and all that sort of thing—but do you think she would have it so? Not a bit of it. 'Where can my son be better than here? Where can he be better taken care of? He has been given back to me through the ranks, I do not want to take him from among the comrades who have been so good to him.' Then there was the question of another opinion. She wouldn't hear of it. 'He cannot be in better hands than yours,' she said, right before them all."

"She was quite right," put in his listener—"quite."

"And she seems so proud of him—I mean of his position here. 'We thought him dead—lost to us,' she said to me, 'and now—to find him here, and in such an honoured position—it is almost too much joy.' She asked about his good conduct stripes, and about his duties as a Colour-Sergeant. I tell you what it is, Mrs. Henneker: there's a good deal in breed, isn't there? Bless my soul, people like the Claverdons can afford to be anything. When first she came it was I who took her into the ward—the Chief and Major Henneker would have it so—and the cry she gave—the soft, low, piteous cry as she fell on her knees by the bed and kissed his poor helpless hand—Amelia was in an awful state about it when I told her, she was indeed."

"I am sure she was," said Mrs. Henneker; "she has been most kind all through. I'm sure Major Henneker and I will never forget——"

"Oh, Amelia's heart is in the right place," said the doctor, somewhat uneasily, conscious of other characteristics in his spouse that were the reverse of popular.

There was a silence after this, which Mrs. Henneker was the first to break:

"Did Mr. Claverdon recognise his mother when she first came?"

"Oh yes, just for a moment, and she showed admirable self-command. I can assure you that after that first moment she never let herself go once. Upon my word, her self-control is amazing; she was white to the lips when the old fellow broke down at sight of his son, and sobbed like a child. She went up to him and took him by the hand, and led him out—they went out like two children hand in hand. Mr. Claverdon is at the 'Imperial,' she insisted upon that as he is not in very

strong health ; but the Sergeant has given up one of his rooms to her, so that she may be always near her son ; and I give you my word, she might have been born in a barrack, she's as much at home as if she'd been a soldier's wife for twenty years, by gad ! she is. Yesterday nothing would do but she must go right through the wards and speak a word to every man there. She told them her father had been a soldier, and how she had lived among soldiers when she was a girl ; but when the men began to gather round her, and to tell of how her son was loved and respected in the Hundred and Ninety-Third, and how he had always held out a helping hand to any man who was down on his luck, I saw the colour fly to her face and the tears gather in her eyes, and she said in a smothered kind of voice, 'Thank you all very, very much for what you have said about my dear, dear son,' and then she hurried out and I followed, in some fear, too, but she turned and smiled at me as she went into her room, and then I heard her lock the door."

"It is all very beautiful," said Mrs. Henneker, "what you are telling me. It brings comfort to me—for Alison's sake."

"And to me, too," said the doctor, now coming to an anchor in Elsie's swing-chair, "but I confess to having been anxious on that one occasion, the poor lady looked so overwrought ; however, she is all right now, for Drummer Coghlan was there this morning and brought that ridiculous little marmozette of his for her to see ; said he thought it would divert her mind and cheer her up, and thought she'd like to know what friends he and the Colour-Sergeant had been. When he'd said the word Colour-Sergeant, he got as red as his own coat, and 'Shure an' I'm after begging your ladyship's pardon,' says he. 'What for ?' she answered. 'Don't you know that I am very proud of my son being a Colour-Sergeant in your regiment, and of you all thinking so highly of him ?' And I really was afraid Coghlan was going to fall on his knees before her then and there, I was indeed."

"I should hardly have wondered if he had," said Mrs. Henneker.

Then both these good people looked very grave, and looked straight into one another's eyes.

"Does Mr. Claverdon know ?" said Mrs. Henneker at length.

"Heaven bless my soul ! No !" almost shouted the doctor.

"Nor yet his mother ?"

Another wild negative, and once more the doctor took to pacing the room. He looked cruelly distressed.

"Her one terrible anxiety seems to be about the poor boy Deacon ; indeed, she is set upon going to see him. She says nothing short of an interview can possibly make him feel the freeness and fulness of her forgiveness ; but she does not know——"

"How terrible it all is !"

"Yes ; yet one dare not criticise, there have been so many of these foul assassinations lately. Remember, it is only a little while back that two noble lives were taken, Venables and the Adjutant of the same regiment."

She covered her face.

"What is to be done ?" said Mrs. Henneker at last. "Who is to tell this noble-souled woman all the truth ?"

"Milman, I think—no one can do it so tenderly—and the Chief says that Claverdon must soon know that the court-martial is over, and will begin to worry himself about the verdict."

Now Milman was the Chaplain.

"Yes," said Mrs. Henneker, "there can be no one better than Mr. Milman for such an office. I hear he is daily with poor Deacon. It is strange that a man with such a feeble personality should have such a hold over the men, isn't it ?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "I have often thought so ; but I have come to the conclusion that it is the great loving heart of the man, enclosed within that small and fragile body, that does the trick. Now I must tell you that Mrs. Claverdon hopes to come across here to-morrow. She wants to see—Alison."

"It is natural she should. I am sure that, so far, the silence that has been kept has been wisest and best ; but now it will be well that they should meet. You know the Colonel brought Mr. Claverdon to call upon us yesterday ? What a noble face he has, and how touching it is to see the delight of the old schoolfellows in being together again ! I think, Dr. Musters, that Alison is a very lucky woman, though I must say, the way in which it has all come about——"

Her voice faltered and broke.

"It has indeed been strange," said the doctor ; "a sort of thing that by no possibility could have happened to any one save an exceptional woman like Alison."

As that day wore on, the injured man made more and more progress, and, to his unspeakable delight, Ensign Green was permitted the boon of seeing the Colour-Sergeant for a few moments. It may be said that Green and Blizzard had more or less lived at the hospital door, so frequent had been their enquiries. The Adjutant, too, had permitted himself to lounge across the square and make his enquiries, little wotting the hand he himself had had in the tragedy. Indeed, he had forgotten all about the colleen with the grey eyes and black lashes by this time, in the pursuit of other and newer prey. It was almost with a start of surprise that he realised the fact that the said colleen was the sweetheart of the man now lying under sentence of death; so true it is that what is small in one man's life, is great in another's.

Poor old Green—as some of his brother officers used to call him—was greatly upset when he saw the Colour-Sergeant. He rushed into the ward, to the inarticulate dismay and rage of Simmons, stumbled over his sword—he chanced to be on duty at the time—and very nearly measured his length on the floor beside the bed.

"My dear fellow," he gasped, seizing Claverdon's hand, "how are you? I was never so grieved—so delighted—good gracious, I beg your pardon. I do indeed!"

This last as a stately figure rose from a chair by the head of the bed, and Mr. Green found himself confronted by a pale, high-bred face, a regal head crowned by a coronal of snow-white hair, the while two grave, dark eyes looked at him graciously.

"I'm very sorry—I'm really very much honoured and delighted—I mean I quite forgot. The fact is, I have had a great regard for Colour-Sergeant—Mr. Claverdon I should say—for a long time, and I give you my word I wanted to say that to him then, I did indeed."

The Colour-Sergeant was smiling, while his mother had a pucker of puzzlement between her dark brows.

"You mean when I picked you up that day?"

"Exactly so—I wanted to say, 'Thank you, my dear fellow,' I did indeed. Blizzard says it was instinct—instinct, you know, eh?"

"I think it was just as well you didn't say so, sir, all the same."

"I say, don't do that, you know. I can't stand it, by Jove! I can't."

"Mr. Green, pardon me—nay, you must forgive me—I am still the Colour-Sergeant of your company, you are still my superior officer. I have been too long in the ranks not to know——"

"I think my son is right," said Mrs. Claverdon, and the voice she spoke in was so sweet, and she was so delightful altogether, that Mr. Green got quite in a flutter, and muttered many "By Joves!" as he got himself down the stairs, and into the square where Blizzard was waiting for him. He described the interview with the hero of as strange a romance as had ever happened in the Hundred and Ninety-Third. He told of the "air" that had grated on him so abominably, and Claverdon's reply to his remonstrance.

"And the worst of it is, I think the beggar's right," he added, when the narrative was finished.

"Certainly he is," said Blizzard, with the air of a martinet to whom the very idea of the slightest infringement of the service was intolerable.

All the hospital was illuminated with a spirit of gladness that evening, since the doctor had announced the Colour-Sergeant to be really out of danger. Orderly Simmons was the most delighted, or "glorified," as he himself expressed it; indeed, so much so, that he indulged in a song as he scrubbed hard at a place in the flags of the corridor where a careless hand had spilt some lamp-oil. This song was a vast favourite in the Hundred and Ninety-Third, and was supposed to be the reply of a soldier to an overbearing civilian who has been running him down in every possible way:

There's one thing I can do,  
Says I!  
Get shot instead of you,  
Says I!  
I can stand me up and die,  
With neither moan nor cry,  
To keep you safe at 'ome,  
Says I!

The clear voice rang up into the ward, a trifle tremulous by reason of the scrubbing operations, but mighty pleasant to hear.

Hubert Claverdon turned to his mother with the boyish laugh she remembered so well in the dear old days, before trouble, and sin, and wrong begat estrangement, and—in the end—a bitter separation.

"Our men think a lot of that song, mother. You should just hear a roomful of them get hold of that chorus. It has done me good to hear it—it is like a voice from the outside world again, the

world that I thought I had done with, mother mine. Well, well, this trouble has brought us together again; you may say like the one of old, may you not? 'For this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found'; and you have forgiven him, mother dear, have you not? I brought so much trouble upon you with my wild, unruly ways, cost you so much sorrow, and I was going downhill still; I tried to give myself a chance—through the ranks—and now, it seems so much more than I deserve to be lying here like this, with your dear hand in mine. Heaven has been very good to me. I have only one trouble; I want to know that the poor headstrong boy whose reckless hand——" Here Simmons's song suddenly ceased; there was a murmur of voices, and the singer suddenly appeared at the door of the ward, while Simmons in his best manner announced a visitor:

"Please, my lady, the Reverend the Chaplain would like to see——"

But he got no further. Mrs. Claverdon had risen and come forward.

"Come in, Mr. Milman," she said, holding out her hand, "Hubert is always glad to see you——"

The Chaplain was deadly pale, and his hand struck cold to hers.

### THE LIFE OF A BROWN RABBIT.

THE ground was broken and the soil was red, where, mid a tangle of undergrowth, the trees of the little coppice irregularly grew. The hedge-mound and dry ditch ran around, and in the odd places where thorn and hazel failed to keep the barrier intact, rough hedge-carpentry stayed the cattle from trespassing in the wood. Alongside lay the sloping pasture-land, stretching up to a waste sandy "rough," where gorse and broom, short sweet grass in patches, and even a little heather, flourished; next the pasture-land was the plough.

In the hedge-mound itself a few rabbit-holes showed themselves, their mouths facing the open, the red earth streaming down the ditch-side; but the chief "buries" were just through the hedge and inside the coppice—in a spot, however, bare of trees, and where the sunlight could fall full and free. Here, amid the bracken-clumps, the ground was honeycombed with burrows, and red with the earth thrown out. Here the rabbit-life centred itself; in and out,

yet all connected together, ran the passages and the chambers, and the herbage above was worn with the tread of hairy feet. From this big bury little paths ran out in all directions, through the flowering "gecks" and trailing brambles of the hedge-side, and the beds of stinging-nettles in the ditch, away into the fields, and up to the gorse-patch beyond. Some twenty yards from the wood-hedge, and out in the meadow, grew bunches of rough tussocky grass, and here a rabbit or two could almost always be found lying out, and a shot be got as they bolted for cover. Between the wood and the gorse-patch above there was a constant going and coming, either by the little paths across the fields, or by way of the cross-hedge that ran out from the wood and divided the pasture from the plough.

The surface-ground was damp with the drizzle of late February, and the wet dripped from the bare-limbed trees, when our brown rabbit, with six other little ones, first made his appearance, blind and naked, at the far end of a small, straight, yard-long burrow, away from the proximity and the disturbing influences of the big family mound. The little nursery at the end of the burrow was lined with bluish fur, plucked from the old doe's breast, and there he passed the first four or five weeks of his existence. But soon he learnt to run and nibble for himself, and then the old doe wasted no more maternal care upon him; she turned him out into the world, and from that day knew him as her offspring no more. So he went to the big mound and cast in his lot with his elders, and from time to time stole out into the bigger world outside. Often he slipped through the hedge, and his little prick ears and white scut could be seen just outside the shelter of the wood; and there in the sweet spring evenings, when the gorse above flamed yellow and the young corn was sprouting, he nipped off with his keen front teeth the green and tender blades, and tasted the first sweet meadow-growth of the year. Unsuspicious and confiding, he nibbled, and gambolled, and, sitting up on his haunches, washed little whiskers with clean little fore-paws, and passed somehow safely through a hundred dangers. He was one of many, and though the grass grew strong in the pasture, and the corn grew close in the field, the tops were soon all eaten off to a distance of several yards from the wood.

The bluebells in the wood died off, and spring became summer. The linnets and

goldfinches fluttered in the still golden gorse, and the carpet of grass in the rough became stained with red-yellow crowfoot blossom. The sturdy thistle crowned itself with purple, the foxgloves near the rabbit-holes in the hedge burst into spires of bloom, and the cowslips in the meadow gave way to dull-red sorrel.

The honey-combed mound was his castle, the wood-hedge and ditch were his rampart and moat, the fields and the gorse-patch were his domains. They were to him the whole world; in them his little life was passed. He grew with the corn: and hidden in its close upstanding wealth, he passed long hot summer days, and short close summer nights. Early mornings, sweet and pure, when the diamond dew lay thick on the meadow grass; moonlight nights, when the fir-trees in the coppice stood out black against the sky, and the corn-crake called monotonously, unceasingly—all, all were his. The long evenings saw him out feeding amongst the pasturing cattle; the blackbird was his sentinel, and its harsh alarm-call sent him flying into cover. The blue-grey quice cooed throbbingly in the trees above him to its mate in the nest, a mere platform of dry withered sticks; the lark sang above the meadow; the linnet trilled in the gorse. The leaves of the wood quivered softly in the summer breeze, the insects hummed in the drowsy afternoon, the hedge-side grew hot in the beams of the sun.

And the tragedy of nature, the drama of life and death, was played before him, but did not dismay him, nor take from him one iota of the joy of present living. In the gloaming, betwixt the day and the night, a red shadow fled out from the cover, and the fox snapped up one furry comrade feeding too carelessly, and too far out in the meadow, for safety; instinctively he fled to the shelter of the burrow, but the fate of his comrade was no concern of his. The weasel tracked another down, and, fastening keen white teeth in the neck, drained the life-blood; he beheld and was impassive, so long as he himself was not singled out for destruction. A spurt of flame and a puff of smoke from the corner of the cross-hedge, and the farmer picked up what had been a living, feeding rabbit and put it in the deep back-pocket of his soiled old coat; the poacher's lurching dog snapped up others; but though comrades failed and came not again to the burrow, he himself lived on,

happy, unconcerned. In the day he saw the hawk seize and tear in pieces the callow birdling out of the hedge; in the dusk he saw the owl, with fluffy wings and silent flight, quarter the meadow and pounce on the shrinking field-mouse. He himself had a score of enemies, but the bloodiness of nature, "red in tooth and claw," did not scare him; mid constant danger he lived, and yet was happy.

The green leaves rustled in the young trees, the meadow grew luscious for him, the clover in the corn was sweet. Ere the cuckoo's call was broken, ere the first scent of hay was in the air, ere the honey-suckle streaked the hedge, or the red poppies flaunted in the corn, he grew fat and full, careful and cunning; the first sign of danger—the cattle moving uneasily in the meadow, the startled clatter of the wood-pigeon, the loud cry of the blackbird, the shrill chatter of the small birds, the thump-thump of another rabbit's hind-legs on the ground—sent him headlong to burrow and safety.

August came, and the heather bloomed; the golden corn was cut and carted, and the partridges called at eventide from the bare stubble. September came with its filmy mornings, and soon the trees grew brown above him, and the bracken flamed in patches around. The blackberries on the brambles grew purple-ripe, and the pheasants stole daintily down the dry ditch, looking for acorns. The thistle-down floated from the gorse-patch to the meadow, the nuts on the hazel bushes grew ruddy-brown, and white-pinafores youngsters from the labourers' cottages came a-nutting. The winter neared with a touch of frost, and the leaves fluttered gently down on to his burrow, and as they fell, his fur grew greyer and thicker. The November rain came down from the gloomy sky, and he stayed underground, fastidiously disliking the drip from the trees. The bright, keen weather silvered with hoar-frost bare boughs and dead bents, and he lay out in tufts of grass, or in the warm, dry hedge-bottoms. The snow fell deep, and put him to hard shifts for food; he nibbled the bark of trees and the tops of the young plantations, and the woodman hated him therefore sorely.

And so the cycle ran round, and winter merged into spring, and spring into summer again. This year his pasture was mowing grass, and the corn-field was clover-bottom; and he lived and rejoiced in his life, and young ones in numbers

grew up around him. And winter came again, and with it the keeper, and nets, and ferrets; and as he bolted in alarm from his dwelling, pushed by the nose of the muzzled ferret, the bag-net closed around him, and a strong hand seized him. Almost ere he could struggle, his neck was broken; his life was ended, and the burrow knew him no more.

### A REMARKABLE CONSPIRACY.

IN the history of Modern France there are few more romantic episodes than the conspiracy of General Malet, which nearly undermined the throne of Napoleon when it seemed most firmly established, and revealed to an observant eye the real rottenness of the Imperial fabric.

General Malet was a soldier of distinction who had seen a good deal of service. One of the important posts entrusted to him had been the military governorship of Rome. There his incorruptible integrity, and firm attitude towards the Papal authorities, had raised against him a host of enemies, who pursued him with incessant calumnies. Replaced by General Miollis, he was summoned to Paris to answer the charges preferred against him. The result was that the Commissioners reported him to have conducted himself always as a man of honour and probity.

The justification was complete; but a short time afterwards, Malet, who had consistently expressed his disapproval of Napoleon's ambitious views, and was associated, at Paris, in the departments, and in the army, with energetic and distinguished men of a similar political complexion, was arrested, by Napoleon's orders, as being involved in a pretended plot which was designated the "senatorial conspiracy." He was imprisoned first at La Force, and afterwards at Vincennes; and it was not until three years of undeserved confinement had elapsed that he obtained permission to reside, under police supervision, in the "maison de santé" of Dr. Dubuisson, situated near the Barrière du Trône.

In 1812, Napoleon committed himself to his fatal expedition into Russia. While he was struggling with its colossal difficulties, General Malet, assured of the support of the patriotic society of the Philadelphians, which had its members among all ranks and in every corps of the

army, resolved to put into execution a project he had carefully matured—the boldness of which, unexampled in the annals of nations, remains to this day as startling and almost incredible as the measure of success that attended it.

To General Malet's wife and her intimate friend, Mademoiselle Boulaix, whose activity, intelligence, and personal graces rendered her worthy of so delicate a commission, was entrusted the task of preparing minds for the changes in contemplation, and of rallying to the General's support the largest possible number of patriots and Royalists. A republican in principle, Malet had assented to this combination only on condition that, in the event of a Bourbon Restoration, the King should accept and swear to observe the Constitution of 1791.

The Abbé Lafon, who was one of the suspects placed under Dubuisson's supervision, and Rateau, a brilliant young corporal of the Paris Guard, who held a position of some kind in the establishment, had also their work assigned to them—the former to compose, and the latter to transcribe, whatever official documents might be found necessary.

Malet, who, with rare sagacity, foresaw the terrible issues of the Russian expedition, assumed, as the preliminary basis of all his combinations, the sudden and unexpected arrival of news of the Emperor's death.

All the details of his enterprise having been settled, he stole out of the garden gate of the Maison Dubuisson at eleven o'clock on the night of October the twenty-second, and accompanied only by Corporal Rateau, prepared to overthrow a great and splendid military empire. At a Spanish priest's lodgings in the Rue Saint Giles he had secreted a couple of uniforms, that of a lieutenant-general for himself and an aide-de-camp's for Rateau. He and Rateau made haste to change their attire, and mounting their horses, which had also been provided, rode off to the barracks of the Second Regiment of the Paris Guard, commanded by Colonel Rabbe. The sentry received them with the usual "Qui vive!" Rateau replied, "Ronde d'officier supérieur." Without giving time for further questions they passed on to the sergeant on duty, whom Malet informed that the General Commanding wished to speak to the Colonel. The sergeant hastened to throw open the gate. Malet and his aide-de-camp dismounted, made

him point out the Colonel's quarters, and entered them simultaneously with the orderly sent to announce them.

Conceive the surprise of Colonel Rabbe to see beside his bed at midnight a general officer in uniform! Malet augmented his astonishment by saying, in rapid accents: "Napoleon is dead! The news arrived some hours ago. The Senate has assembled and deposed his son; a Provisional Government has been nominated, including Carnot, Moreau, Augereau, Bigonet, Florent-Guyot, Trochet, Tracy, Jacquemont, Lambrechts, Mathieu Montmorency, Alexis de Noailles, the Admiral Truguet, Volney, Garat, and myself. I have been appointed to the command of Paris." He added that his instructions charged him with the duty of providing for the safety of the capital, and preventing the disorders which might take place when the news was published. And he concluded by saying that he was ordered to call out Colonel Rabbe's regiment, and that he must march at its head to fulfil the dispositions prescribed by the new Government, and take the necessary measures.

Surprise crowding upon surprise, the unfortunate Colonel wondered whether he was awake or dreaming, and how much reliance might be placed on the extraordinary tale told by Malet. Without allowing him much time for reflection, Malet placed in his hands a packet which contained, beside the proclamation of the Senate and the organic senatus-consultum, a copy of the nomination of Malet, and an order to get his regiment under arms. While the Colonel opened the packet and began to read its contents, Malet handed him a second one, which enclosed his nomination to the rank of Brigadier-General, and the title-deeds to a gift of ten thousand livres of revenue.

These repeated attacks on the conscience of Colonel Rabbe proved irresistible. How, indeed, could he suppose that all he heard, read, and saw with his own eyes, was a deception and a fraud? He placed his regiment under arms, and at the disposal of General Malet, who immediately proceeded to the barracks of the Tenth Cohort of the National Guards, where by the same means he obtained the same result, and all the more readily because he had a regiment under his orders. He then began operations, distributing his force into detachments which he posted at the Treasury, the Bank, the Post Office, and the Hôtel de Ville; while he himself,

with the rapidity which had marked all his movements, proceeded to the prison of La Force, and released Generals Lahorie and Guidal, placing in the hands of Lahorie his nomination to the prefecture of police, and of Guidal to the ministry of the general police. Great indeed was the astonishment of these two Generals, roused from their slumbers by a body of soldiers who saluted them with their new titles; but Malet at once put detachments under their orders, instructing them to seize their predecessors in the two offices to which they had been appointed, and to throw them into the prisons from which they themselves had just been delivered.

Malet, with a hundred and fifty men, then marched to the Place Vendôme. While his agents were arresting the Duc de Rovigo and Baron Pasquier—who afterwards escaped—he ascended with swift step to Count Hulin, who was in command of the first military division.

To him he notified orally, for he had not reserved for him the honour of official communications, the establishment of a new condition of things, and announced that he had orders to replace him in his command.

"Where are your orders?" enquired the Count incredulously.

"Here!" replied Malet, discharging a pistol full in his face, and breaking his lower jaw.

This was the end of his triumphal progress. Laborde, the chief of the military police, had escaped from the hands of those who had arrested him; and while Malet was giving his orders to Doucet, chief of the staff, he entered unperceived, threw himself upon the arch conspirator, flung him to the ground, and gave him into the custody of some gendarmes whom he had summoned. Then he descended into the street, harangued the soldiers, declared that they had been befooled and deceived, that the Emperor was not dead, and that the General they had followed was simply a prisoner of state, whom he had just arrested, and who would suffer on the scaffold the penalty of treason. The soldiers listened eagerly, and soon made up their minds. They had associated themselves with the fortunes of the conspirator, and had revolutionised Paris at his command; but Laborde had wounded their self-love; they resented having been duped; and the General



whom they had just followed and exalted, they seized in a sudden access of indignation, reproached him with his treason, and dragged him in their fury, first to the ministry of police, and thence to the prison of the Abbaye.

Such was the abortive termination of an enterprise conceived with so much skill and conducted with so much vigour, resolution, and ability; an enterprise which brought in a moment the Imperial Government to the brink of ruin.

At ten o'clock next morning the following proclamation revealed to the inhabitants of Paris the danger which the Empire had incurred and escaped during that memorable night:

"Three ex-Generals, Malet, Lahorie, and Guidal, have deceived some National Guards, and directed them against the ministry of the general police, the Prefect of police, and the Commandant of Paris, whom they treated with violence. They spread abroad a false report of the Emperor's death.

"These ex-Generals have been arrested, and justice will be meted out to them.

"The most absolute tranquillity prevails in Paris. It has been disturbed only in the three hotels where the brigands are confined.

"The Minister of the General Police,  
"DUC DE ROVIGO."

The Imperial Government, in revenge for having been so easily entrapped, showed a violent haste to punish the offenders, and a kind of pride in proving itself pitiless. Three hundred persons were arrested, including Madame Malet, Mademoiselle Boulais, General Lamotte, all General Malet's friends, and all whose names were found among his papers, though having no connection with his design.

A council of war was summoned immediately. Before it were brought twenty-four of the accused.

Throughout the trial, which was distinguished by rapidity of procedure, Malet exhibited an imperturbable coolness, doing his utmost to exculpate Colonel Soulier, Commandant of the Tenth Cohort, and making generous efforts to save his fellow-accused.

"Who are your accomplices?" enquired the president Dejean.

"All France," he replied, "and you yourself if I had succeeded."

"What have you to say in your defence?"

"Nothing. A man who has constituted himself the defender of the rights of his country has no need of defence; he triumphs or he dies!"

General Lahorie urged some considerations founded more particularly on his ignorance of Malet's designs. Monsieur Oaubert, who had undertaken the defence of some of the accused, argued on the same lines, terminating his brilliant speech as follows: "What will be the result of this trial? No doubt the punishment of some of the guilty, but surely indulgence for those who have been only imprudent; while for the Emperor the issue will be that this conspiracy, the wildest folly imaginable, will serve to manifest more and more clearly the love borne to him by all his subjects as well as all his brave soldiers."

The commission having retired to deliberate in private, returned into court at four in the morning, and delivered judgement. It unanimously condemned Claude François Malet, ex-General of Brigade, in reparation of his crimes against the internal safety of the State, his attempt to destroy the Government and the order of succession to the throne, and his inviting the citizens to arms, to the penalty of death and confiscation of his property; it unanimously condemned Râteau and eleven others, as accomplices, to the penalty of death; by a majority of six to one, it condemned Rabbe to the penalty of death; and, by a majority of five to two, it condemned Bocciechampe to the same penalty.

The others were acquitted. Execution was ordered in twenty-four hours.

The fatal moment speedily arrived. Malet and the fourteen other sufferers were conveyed in ordinary fiacres from the prison of the Abbaye to the plain of Grenelle, the place chosen for their punishment. The funeral procession had already reached the esplanade of the Champ de Mars when an express overtook it with a reprieve for Colonel Rabbe, much to the gratification of General Malet.

On reaching the plain of La Grenelle, where an immense multitude had assembled, they were placed in front of a platoon of veterans of the Paris Guard. They gave the word to fire in a firm voice, and died without bravado and without weakness.

Malet, at the time of his death, was in his fifty-eighth year. A month later, and Napoleon learned at one and the same

time, in the midst of the disasters of his army, the conspiracy which had threatened his throne, and the punishment of its authors. History has recorded the severe words which, on his precipitate return to Paris, he addressed to the high dignitaries of State, the magistrates, the Senate, and all who at such a conjuncture had displayed so little courage. "Weak and timid soldiers," he said, "destroy the independence of nations; but pusillanimous magistrates imperil the supremacy of the laws, the rights of the throne, and social order itself." Words such as these are a significant proof that Napoleon was far from regarding the daring attempt of Malet as the dream of a madman. And posterity will probably be of the same opinion, and will acknowledge that if Malet were guilty, at least his crime had its origin in the most sublime of virtues—the love of Liberty.

#### AMATEUR WORKHOUSE VISITING.

My first introduction to the inmates of Blank Workhouse was on a beautiful summer day, when all who were in the least locomotive came out to tea at a country house in the neighbourhood. Directly I arrived I was deputed to do the honours of the garden to the matron, leaving to our hostess the more congenial task of entertaining the old people. Seldom have I felt my own personal insignificance more acutely than in the presence of that matron. She was a fine woman of about fifty, with fashionable red hair, and a commanding manner. In spite of the midsummer heat she was completely clad in black satin. It is not too much to say that I felt an instantaneous prejudice against this majestic figure. She seemed such an uncomfortable person to have charge of a lot of old people and babies. At the same time I was conscious of a rather cowardly desire to propitiate this representative of authority. I speedily found an opportunity of ingratiating myself in her favour by relieving her of a dripping flower which she had inadvertently accepted from the gardener, and which was obviously causing much damage to a new pair of black kid gloves. From this moment I date a certain relaxation in the severity of her manner, which gradually ripened into positive cordiality.

All this time the inmates—to employ the technical term—were wandering

vaguely up and down the great lawn in front of the house. It was a curious assembly, mainly composed of the old or decrepit, although the presence of a group of children was possibly the saddest feature of the whole party. However, amongst the men I gradually identified various figures whose appearance by no means suggested unqualified misery. Curiosity compelled me to address one of them—a man of about sixty years of age—and after a few remarks on indifferent subjects, I boldly enquired why he had come into the workhouse.

"Left a poor orphan, mum," he replied, with a sigh of self-pity. "Lost both parents a few years since, so it seemed as I'd better come into the House."

"And who is that?" I continued, indicating a jaunty, elderly person in a tall hat, who was strutting about in the proud consciousness of having an unusually smart flower in his button-hole.

"Oh, that's Mr. Brown, mum."

"And why is Mr. Brown in the workhouse?"

"A bit idle, mum, a bit idle!" whispered my informant confidentially. But one could see that he thought none the less of Mr. Brown on that account.

Speaking personally, I felt more grateful to Mr. Brown and the orphan than words can describe. The brief summary of their lives for the moment entirely dispelled the heavy cloud of depression which had been settling down on my spirits ever since the arrival of the workhouse party.

That autumn our hostess was obliged to leave the neighbourhood for an indefinite period, and delegated to me the task of visiting Blank Workhouse during her absence. At first I hesitated from an innate fear of the unknown. However, as I had no real objections to urge, she insisted, and I yielded. The preliminary form of applying to the Board of Guardians for permission to visit the workhouse was gone through. I may here remark that there was not the slightest difficulty, as far as my experience went, about gaining admission at any time. For many years after this I was in the habit of dropping in whenever I happened to be passing, on any day of the week, and practically at any hour of the day. I do not mean to say that I made an exhaustive examination of the workhouse whenever I liked. Such was not my intention for various reasons, the foremost being that there is very little use in discovering abuses unless one has a

clear idea how to remedy them. But I never experienced any difficulty in gratifying my curiosity as far as it went. Moreover, the officials invariably appeared pleased by my visits, and often pressed me to make them more frequent.

My first afternoon at Blank Union made a considerable impression on me. Climbing a steep hill, I paused a moment to admire the beautiful view thus gained over the little town, and then with much trepidation pulled the bell. A female inmate came to my rescue and piloted me safely through several cheerless stone courts into the presence of the matron, who received me most graciously. Cooking the dinner, in a cotton dress, she looked much less formidable and more prepossessing than at a garden party. And a subsequent acquaintance showed that she was really a kind-hearted woman after her fashion. For instance, she made a great distinction between the sick and aged, and those who came into the workhouse under less creditable circumstances; usually alluding to three or four bedridden old souls who permanently occupied the sick-room, as "the poor old ladies." I always liked this little form of speech. It seemed a tacit acknowledgement of the inalienable dignity of old age.

Workhouses naturally contain a very shifting population. The sick and aged are continually dying off, whilst the young are as continually streaming out into the world. The worst cases are those that almost annually drift back into the workhouse, bringing with them each time an accumulated mass of shame, until in the interests of society and the rates they are finally detained in what is practically a lifelong imprisonment. But at Blank, and I suppose in all workhouses, there were a few chronic cases who through no fault of their own had for many years known no other home. Such were Eliza and Susan, two middle-aged women recommended to my notice by the matron as being thoroughly deserving of any small attentions or benefits I liked to bestow.

"And you can depend on what they say," she remarked; "they won't tell you any false tales, like most of the others."

This was high praise from one who had been rendered suspicious by many years of contact with the shady side of life. And poor Eliza and Susan fully merited this slight meed of praise. A more contented, resigned couple it would have been hard to find. I soon became acquainted

with their simple histories. Eliza ought to have been, and in appearance was, a hard-working general servant. But she suffered from mental attacks which compelled her to be drafted from time to time into the county lunatic asylum. Her return to the workhouse when the attack was over she quite regarded as coming home. They were always genuinely sorry to part with her, for she was an exceedingly steady, industrious person, and did much of the scrubbing and mending that went on in the House. And her dislike to "going away," as she termed it, was very great.

"We shall have to part with poor Eliza again," said the matron to me one day. "It's been coming on her for some time, she's been getting so irritable and restless at her work."

On my expressing sympathy, she enquired if I would like to speak to Eliza, adding at the same time that she feared nothing would rouse her.

We went upstairs, and the matron opened a door. Could that wild figure wandering aimlessly up and down the long room, with dishevelled garments and rough hair flowing in all directions, be the plain little woman who generally contrived to look like a respectable housemaid, in her neat brown stuff dress, and workhouse cap?

"A lady has come to see you, Eliza," said the matron.

It was no use. Eliza stopped for a moment, stared vacantly in our direction, and then resumed her aimless walk, humming and laughing gently to herself from time to time. When I see gifted actresses personating Ophelia, it always brings back a slight flavour of that workhouse bedroom.

Then there was Susan, whose life during the years I knew her was one long patient endurance of suffering. As a girl she had been in service, but rheumatism, brought on by sleeping in a damp room, had entirely crippled her. When we first met she was practically paralysed, and could barely move her fingers sufficiently to knit. Afterwards she lost even this amount of power. She was a far more intelligent, refined-looking person than Eliza, who, however, appeared to wait most kindly on her infirm friend.

The old workhouse at Blank was certainly not a comfortable building. It had been condemned for many years, and was only waiting to be pulled down at the time

I knew it. The ingenuity that must originally have been employed to render that building the very quintessence of hideous dreariness was a perpetual source of wonder to me. The workhouse naturally commanded a delightful view across the picturesque little town to the beautifully wooded hills beyond. Whether the contemplation of this charming prospect would have been appreciated by the ordinary run of paupers is an open question; at the worst one might suppose that it was an inexpensive luxury that they could enjoy or neglect according to taste. But the architect of Blank Workhouse had decreed otherwise. The building was so contrived that all the windows looked into small stone-paved courtyards, whose only ornament was a pump or a water-butt.

The Union being a small one, and in a very rural district, the arrangements were by no means as orderly as is usually the case in public institutions. One cheerless apartment was set apart as the sick-room, and was usually occupied by Susan, a couple of bedridden old women, and on two occasions—very temporarily—by people in the last stages of cancer. For these last the nursing arrangements must have been very inadequate. One of them, who had herself been a hospital nurse in former days, bitterly complained of the absence of any appliances or conveniences for nursing. Yet it was not precisely the fault of the officials. There was at that time no trained nurse, and amongst the inmates themselves there was a great scarcity of able-bodied people to help. Eliza and another kindly little half-witted woman were the usual attendants on the sick-room. Yet the matron was by no means devoid of feeling. On one occasion she had Susan, who was entirely helpless, carried out of the sick-room so that she might be spared the sight of a death. Another time, also, I remember her allowing Susan to occupy a separate room because she found that the poor woman was so upset by the filthy habits of a companion as to be unable to eat.

Some of those companions were inevitably most unattractive. There was one woman especially who was brought in suffering from a broken thigh, having fallen off a ladder in an epileptic fit. She was only partially responsible for her actions, and her insensibility to pain was something marvellous. On a former occasion she had fallen into the fire and reduced one arm to a stump, which she used to wave dramatically whilst she inveighed with much bitterness against

her husband for not coming to see her. This was the chief subject of her discourse. On the surface it did seem rather a hard case, as her husband was a labourer living in the neighbourhood. But public opinion, as represented by the female inmates, justified his action, alleging that her language was so outrageous when he did come, that no man could be expected to repeat the visit. After being the terror and annoyance of the sick-room for months, she became so violent, that in spite of her infirmities she contrived to crawl across the room one night and attack another woman with a stick. Then the doctor felt justified in ordering her removal to the county asylum, to the great relief of her former associates. A wonderful number of inmates had, at some portion of their lives, suffered from what may broadly be described as fits. As a consequence their understandings had been weakened early in life, and they had fallen into trouble and disgrace which had incapacitated them for active service, so that, sooner or later, they inevitably drifted into the workhouse. Many of them were, doubtless, more objects of pity than blame; but I could well believe the repeated assurances of the matron that they were a singularly helpless, irritating class to deal with.

The pleasantest and best-mannered woman I remember seeing at Blank, was an itinerant hawker by trade, who had broken down on the road with a bad foot. Whether she had any history I do not know, for no sooner did I become interested in her than she left the house and resumed her wandering life.

Of thoroughly respectable, attractive old people I did not come across very many examples. One sad case recurs to me, however: a tall, thin, stern-looking old woman, savagely independent and impenetrably reserved. She was unmarried, and had lived alone for many years in a country cottage, supporting herself by straw-plaiting. At last becoming too feeble to work, she was discovered by the neighbours half-dead from starvation, and in an indescribable condition of neglect. There was nothing for it but to carry her to the Union. Here she partially recovered, and used to sit in a corner of the sick-room, silent, with her Bible open before her: a gaunt, tragic figure. She seldom spoke, and answered very briefly when addressed. I have sometimes offered her flowers that I brought with me, hoping to arouse some

expression of interest, but beyond thanking me civilly she appeared to take very little notice of my advances. All her faculties seemed concentrated on one object which she kept firmly grasped in her hand by day and night. It was the key of the cottage in which she had lived for so many years, and to which she dimly looked forward to returning eventually. We knew that the little place was inhabited by strangers, and that her few bits of furniture had long since been sold up and dispersed—but to the old woman it seemed that, if only she kept possession of her key, she would some day return home. Once the talisman was lost, and poor Martha gave the house no peace until a thorough search had been made, and the missing property restored. I suppose she must have been slightly deranged on this one subject, although in most respects perfectly sane. At all events, during the few months that she lived in the workhouse all her interests and affections centred in that key. She died with it clasped in her hand, and it was buried with her—for the official mind has more sentiment than it is sometimes credited with.

The time actually came at last that the old workhouse was to be abolished, and a new one raised in its place. The inmates were in the meantime to be scattered abroad amongst other Unions, excepting a few incurable cases for whom lodgings were taken in the town. Susan was one of these. It had been settled at first that during the alterations she was to return to her relations, who were cottagers in the neighbourhood. But in her helpless condition she so shrank from the change of surroundings, that the matron represented her case strongly to the guardians and obtained permission to keep her at Blank. She died before the new house was complete, racked with disease, but absolutely patient and uncomplaining to the last.

Most of the inmates exhibited dread and dislike at the idea of being dispersed amongst other Unions. The small size and general irregularity of everything at Blank was more to their minds than forming part of a model establishment. "They don't like having everything so well laid out that there's a men's pump and a females' pump, and no need for them to go into the same yard," remarked the matron when we were discussing the subject. This innate dislike to all orderly habits undoubtedly constitutes one of a pauper's greatest

miseries. The enforced cleanliness, the perpetual atmosphere of yellow soap and whitewash, that reign in a workhouse, are gross outrages on his nature.

One of the rules most constantly violated is that forbidding the heaping up of cast-off clothing upon the beds at night. One might imagine that an insufficiency of blankets was answerable for this untidy habit. But in the sick-room at all events there never appeared any stint of fire—a luxury to which the inmates were of course absolute strangers in their cottage bedrooms. And yet the old people never felt perfectly cosy unless, unobserved by the matron, they had contrived to supplement their bedclothes with a mass of stuffy garments.

No doubt it is difficult to cheerfully conform to sanitary regulations after a long life spent in hovels, where little if any cleaning is ever attempted, and where all the refuse of years lies either on the floor, or at the best just outside the doorstep. Again, any person who has ever noticed the way in which many poor people prefer to eat just when they are hungry, without adhering to any regular hours, must admit that workhouse rules press harder on them in some respects than they would on us. I know cottages in which the children seem to be invariably helping themselves to food out of the cupboard, at whatever time one calls. Having once apologised to a most respectable old couple for repeatedly interrupting them at their dinner or tea, they explained to me that they varied the hours of their meals daily to suit their inclination and convenience. As a general rule any sort of restraint appears irksome to the poor. "Well, mum, you see I have nothing to give them but their liberty, so I give them that," was the answer of a poor woman to a benevolent lady, who was admonishing her not to let her daughter run loose in the streets at night. This species of early liberty is doubly unfortunate, as it both paves the way to the workhouse, and renders a sojourn there particularly tedious. To sum up the whole matter, an inmate's ideal of comfort and ours will usually be found to be diametrically opposed. Just what a visitor is apt to consider the strong points of a workhouse are those which the ordinary pauper dislikes most. It is well to remember that cleanliness may mean just as real misery to some people as dirt does to others. Let me illustrate this proposition.

One of my friends was in the habit of visiting an old labourer, whose generally unkempt and neglected appearance excited her pity. At length she worked upon the feelings of a daughter who was keeping house for him, and urged her to pay more attention to her father's bodily comforts; suggesting as a preliminary step that she should trim up the old man's matted grey locks, and attempt to make him more presentable in various ways. On my friend's next visit, she found poor Richard shivering over the fire, and his daughter full of pent-up indignation.

"What's the matter, indeed!" she burst out. "Why, there I've been and took your advice and washed father's neck. I han'na done such a thing for years, and shan't again, that's certain! Why, the poor old man have been nigh starved with the cold ever since!"

Probably the inmates of Blank Union were allowed rather more license than would be possible in a larger house. I have seen an old woman toasting a bit of bread over the sick-room fire for her tea, and infinitely preferring this morsel to any food she obtained in a more regular way. Another half-witted woman, who had sustained injuries through falling into the fire—rather an ordinary form of accident—was allowed to smoke a pipe as a sedative whenever the doctor dressed her burns. In this case the smoker occupied a room to herself, so there could be no objection to gratifying the poor creature's ruling passion. But I have sometimes questioned whether I acted entirely with a view to the greatest happiness of the greatest number in supplying a bedridden old woman in the sick-room with tobacco. However, we had been acquainted in private life, and retaining a lively recollection of how she used to enjoy her pipe at home, I could not resist the temptation of earning a little heartfelt gratitude at the trifling outlay of a packet of birdseye.

It may reasonably be asked why I confined my attentions so exclusively to the inhabitants of the sick-room. Well, it seems the only department of a workhouse in which an occasional visitor, with no experience of teaching, or reformatory work, can do any good. Undoubtedly, there is much to be done in the way of getting the girls out into respectable service. Occasionally it may be very useful to supplement the clothes allowed them on leaving the House with a few

extra garments. Some years ago, I remember the matron at Blank Union being severely reprimanded by the guardians for exceeding her instructions, and supplying a girl with night-gowns on going out to service. She explained to me that it was rather a superior situation, and she was really ashamed to send the girl unprovided with such clothes as her fellow-servants might be expected to wear. But it is very little use taking a temporary interest in a girl unless one is prepared to keep a watch over her future career. From the nature of the case, it is a troublesome, and in many instances a thankless task. Between hereditary vice and contaminating early associations, it is no wonder that many workhouse girls are a source of nothing but anxiety to their well-wishers. They often make thriftless and very exasperating servants. Not long ago, I heard of a tradesman's wife complaining that her servant, a workhouse girl, flatly declined to carry a parcel, not on account of its weight, but because she objected on principle to being seen in the streets with anything but an umbrella in her hand.

There are brilliant exceptions, happily, to all rules. One day a well-dressed young tradesman passed me at the entrance of the workhouse. The matron proudly drew my attention to him, and informed me that a few years before he had been one of their workhouse boys, and that now he was doing remarkably well in some London business. It struck me as creditable to all parties concerned that the young man, finding himself in the neighbourhood, should voluntarily have returned to spend an afternoon with the master and matron.

Soon after the old workhouse was pulled down, my connection with Blank ceased for a time. When, after a couple of years, I returned to the neighbourhood, it was to find many changes at the Union. The new building had recently been completed, and was a handsome and spacious edifice compared with its predecessor. Other still more important changes had taken place internally. A new master and matron reigned in the place of my old acquaintances, and owing to them the workhouse arrangements were on a much more modern footing than formerly. The changes and improvements that they introduced were naturally much facilitated by the new buildings.

The new-comers were perfect representatives of the modern type of clever

cockney official. One could not fail to be staggered by their self-assurance, and at the same time overwhelmed by the administrative capacity that they displayed. They had both for many years filled subordinate positions in large town Unions, and were amply qualified for the task of rousing an old-fashioned provincial workhouse out of its customary torpor. They took great pride in the accuracy and punctuality with which the daily routine was performed, and used to inform me with justifiable self-satisfaction of the incredibly short time in which the meals were brought up and served round, so that each person received his or her portion before it had cooled. Whether the inmates were grateful for this accession of comfort I do not know. Probably they received it with the apparent indifference that is so characteristic of country paupers.

"Their patience is wonderful in the country compared with the towns," remarked the new master. "They never grumble or fuss for their rights. On one occasion when dinner was accidentally delayed half an hour, they all waited quietly till it was ready without making any remark. If such a thing had happened in a large town Union, the house would have mutinied! Why, this little place is more like a Home for the Aged and Infirm than a real workhouse!" he added, with a touch of scorn. "Vice? No. Certainly there are some poor, half-witted creatures here who have got into trouble, but it's a different class altogether to what we get in London or the north."

It was a shade humiliating to be told that the only workhouse I knew was by no means a representative establishment. But the distinction between town and country was probably correct. There were no real criminals at Blank, only a collection of wretched specimens of humanity.

During my years of connection with the workhouse, one point was very frequently debated, namely, whether it was more beneficial to the children to be educated entirely within the precincts of the Union, or to attend the National School. The old-fashioned officials preferred the former method, alleging with some show of reason that mixing with other children usually involved, sooner or later, the introduction of infectious diseases into the workhouse. This was all the more annoying, because owing to the isolated position of the building, it generally enjoyed a remarkable immunity

from infectious complaints. The new master, however, maintained with still greater reason that the risk of measles or whooping-cough could not outweigh the benefits the children would derive from mixing freely with the outer world. Nothing, he contended, would remove the "pauper taint" so effectually as allowing the children to share the same education and interests as their more fortunate neighbours. Moreover, he boldly applied to the guardians for permission to fit the boys out with linen collars for wearing at school, a little addition to the ordinary workhouse costume which added greatly to their appearance. In justice to the guardians I must say that they entirely acquiesced in these suggestions, when once convinced that they would conduce wholly to the children's benefit. So it was finally settled that the children were to attend the National School, one dissentient voice only being raised by a benevolent guardian, who urged that it was cruel to expect them to walk a quarter of a mile to their lessons in all weathers. In a neighbourhood where many of the cottage children walk a couple of miles, over wind-swept hills or down mud-blocked lanes, to school, this objection naturally excited nothing but a passing smile.

One of the most successful entertainments I have ever attended was a Christmas Tree at Blank Workhouse. The party was given by some ladies in the neighbourhood, and the number of inmates being comparatively so small, it was possible to be more lavish with presents than is usual on such occasions. The tea was really a pretty sight, the large new red-brick room being temporarily converted by garlands of evergreens into quite a festive banquet hall. One of the ladies had thoughtfully ordered a supply of ordinary cups and saucers from the inn, so that for one evening the poor people might dispense with the mugs out of which they usually drank. I entirely sympathised with her action, for the presence of a tin mug by the bedside of a sick person has often struck me as one of the dreariest things in connection with the workhouse. Certainly the children at Blank were a very healthy-looking lot—wonderfully so, indeed, considering what a bad start in life many of them had. The little girls' dark stuff dresses were brightened up for the Christmas party by the addition of red Turkey twill sashes, prepared by the matron for the occasion. The enjoyment these sashes

gave to their little wearers, and the expressions of admiration they extracted from visitors, must well have repaid her for the trouble. Under the old régime the officials seemed to have the comfort of the inmates considerably at heart, all things considering; but this pride in the external appearance of their charges was quite an innovation. Whether the same change has taken place in all workhouses, or whether it was merely due to our having an unusually active master and matron, I do not know.

Whilst awaiting the distribution of presents round the Christmas tree, I found myself standing between a quiet, nice-looking youth, and a dreadfully deformed cripple. The former looked so much the more attractive that I decided to address him first. It was a bad shot. After making several remarks and receiving no response, I was about to retire somewhat abashed, when the cripple interposed and explained that his companion was almost stone-deaf. It seemed a sad case, as apparently the boy was at about seventeen hopelessly condemned to a lifelong sojourn in the workhouse. His employment consisted in cleaning the knives and boots of the establishment. The cripple, who turned out to be a very civil young fellow in spite of an unavoidably distressing appearance, told me that he had been knocked down as a boy whilst driving cows, and had injured his hip. He seemed very cheerful in spite of being terribly contorted, and quite unable to move without crutches.

Presently I noticed an old man sitting by the fire, rather apart from the circle round the Christmas tree. He was lame, and had been carried into the room in a chair. Very soon I entered into conversation with him and heard the outlines of his history. He was now eighty years of age, and in early life had been a fairly prosperous country butcher. Gradually he had grown too old for his work, at last his wife died, and being childless he had no one to look after his house. Then came a period of miserable discomfort in lodgings, which probably absorbed most of his little savings. One brother was already in Blank Workhouse, so at last he thought that he would come in too.

"But had you no other relations?" I enquired.

"Ay, nephews and nieces. They were very willing I should come and live with them, but I know well what 'twould be

when my bit of money's all gone! I've seen a lot of that living with relations, so I thought I'd just come in here."

The meeting of the two old brothers in the workhouse struck even the matter-of-fact master as containing the elements of a tragedy. "I looked to see how they would meet," he said, "for I thought the poor old fellows would surely feel it very much, having been in such a different position once. But no! they hardly seemed to notice it at all. 'How are you, John? You'll get better here.' That was all."

The master's account, which was quite borne out by old John's statement to me, makes me hope that all the inmates do not suffer acutely from passing their old age in the workhouse. Of course, as regards mere material comfort, the old man was far better off in a clean, airy house, with good fires and constant attention, than he can have been alone in lodgings. And, for a wonder, he seemed to recognise it.

A few bedridden old women had their tea and presents carried to them in the sick-room. I seized the opportunity of looking up my old haunts. Certainly the invalids were far better housed than formerly. A suite of rooms detached from the main building was now devoted to their use; the view from the windows left nothing to desire; the red blinds looked singularly cheerful. A regular nurse was now always in charge of the sick—a most necessary functionary when it is considered that having no hospital near, people suffering from bad accidents or acute illness were often carried to the workhouse, where the doctor could see them daily. For instance, during the influenza epidemic, a farmer, missing his waggoner from work, went to his cottage, and found the man and his wife upstairs too ill to move, and several children in the kitchen below vainly asking for food. No one could be found to nurse the sick couple, for in every household there were people more or less gravely ill. There was nothing to be done but to convey the man and his wife and baby to the workhouse to be nursed, whilst neighbours consented to look after the older children. Probably this was only one out of very many similar cases.

The inmates of the sick-room had changed wonderfully little. If they were not the actual individuals I had known formerly, still they were the same types as ever. There was the nice-looking old woman who is never weary of detailing



how the doctor complimented her on her bravery when amputating her leg, and what extraordinary sensations she has in the missing member. And that other old woman who tells you gravely how the witches used to meet on the wooded knoll outside her native village. Sometimes she gets a little confused and fancies that the witches inhabit the sick-room, disporting themselves, for choice, on the ceiling; but she is quite sensible enough to appreciate the unusually good tea, and the little presents that accompany it. By-the-bye, the taste that even the worst invalids in the workhouse have for cake is something marvellous. Really in the last stages of old age or illness, they seem always inclined to try a bit of cake as long as they can swallow anything. The other inhabitants of the sick-room are generally deaf old women, with whom one chiefly communicates by a series of nods and smiles. They were a great anxiety to me in my visiting days, as I always feared they might feel neglected whilst I was reading or talking to the others. Often have I strained my voice almost to extinction, to say nothing of being a terrible disturbance to my neighbours, in the vain effort to include the deaf division in my discourse. But whether they heard or not, they recognised that my efforts were well meant, and greeted me as cordially as circumstances would admit.

The following little scene took place in the workhouse garden not long ago:

Old man engaged in weeding, suddenly addressing the new London master: "Whatever shall I do with these here Beaconsfields, sir? Throw 'em away, or plant 'em?"

Master, puzzled: "Throw what away?"

Old man, brandishing some primrose roots: "Why, these here old Ben Diraelis, of course!"

Master: "So we have politics even in here, have we?"

Old man proudly: "Ah, I'm a bit of an old Tory still!"

One cannot help respecting Toryism that is of such a robust nature as to survive a lengthened sojourn in the workhouse! In a general way the old women were the keenest politicians in the Union, and were, moreover, always ready to do battle for their cause.

It is a matter of common experience that newspapers are eagerly devoured by the inmates of workhouses. Illustrated papers are naturally the greatest favourites; next to them come either the London

dailies or the local paper. Provided with any of these you may make sure of a hearty welcome. Indeed, workhouse visiting may have its drawbacks, but it has also distinct advantages. If the surroundings of the inmates are somewhat dreary and depressing, they are also wonderfully clean and airy, which is no small consideration for a visitor. And one's welcome is practically assured, for though an occasional visitor cannot reasonably hope to accomplish any great work, or introduce any startling reforms, there can be no doubt that the very sight of a stranger from time to time is a rare boon to those inmates whose lives are mainly unhappy because so monotonous.

## THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

### CHAPTER XI.

THE inquest held on Mr. Anson and Dolores threw a certain amount of light on the family history of the Ansons. All that concerned the death of Mr. Anson and Dolores was, necessarily, made public. The mystery of the Grey Boy was partially explained. Mr. Anson's death was brought in as suicide while temporarily insane, while the post-mortem showed that Dolores, whose heart had been always weak, actually died of fright. The livid marks about her throat were explained to have been caused by a half-mad creature, who lived with the Ansons, and whose occasional escapes from the confinement in which, on account of his homicidal mania, they were obliged to keep him, had raised again the old story of the Grey Boy, the Ansons having made use of the old ghostly tradition to conceal the existence of the creature under their charge. He had been wounded by Mr. Anson, who had fired at him before killing himself. The wound was not mortal, and, at the instigation of the doctors called in to attend him, he was, when cured, removed to an asylum. There was no reason now why he should be kept at Moorlands. Why his existence had been hidden away there at all, no one but Leila ever knew. And she only learned it many years later. The whole truth of the black story she never heard. Her husband offered once to tell it to her. But she would not have it recalled from the vanished past, and her husband caught her to him and kissed her passionately.

"My darling! You are happier for not

knowing! I cannot bear to think that even its shadow should touch you!"

But she learned that the Ansons' life at Moorlands had been one of enforced expiation of a foul and treacherous crime. Hesketh Anson was innocent of it, but the horror of it had touched his life too, and for his brother and his wife's sake he had been compelled to take part in that life of expiation. The charge of the dreadful creature known as the Grey Boy was the heaviest portion of their penance. They were to keep its existence a secret, and the day it became known they would not only forfeit the fortune, but incur the risk of the publication of their crime, with the possibility of paying their life in shameful forfeit.

Mr. Anson was now dead. When they went to tell Mrs. Anson of all that had happened, they found her room empty. She had that very night broken out of her prison, risking the penalty of her conduct, and fled, taking all her jewels with her. She had evidently prepared everything for her flight beforehand.

If Hesketh Anson suspected her whereabouts, and Leila fancied that he did, he gave no sign; and none of those who had known her in England at any rate ever heard of her again. But though much of the mystery of their life at Moorlands was not explained to her till many years afterwards, before she left it for good, the afternoon of the day on which the inquest took place, she saw Hesketh Anson in a new light.

He came to her as she was putting her things together before leaving, and though he did not speak much of himself, yet he said enough to let her see how much she had misjudged him. The shock of Dolores's death had been a terrible one to him. He felt it more than all the rest. Indeed, it seemed to her as if the exposure of the family secret brought a certain relief to him. She discovered that his seeming harshness and hardness had been a necessity, owing to the wild and reckless extravagance of Mrs. Anson, who had spent a small fortune in jewels and toilettes, the jewels which she had taken away with her.

Though the Ansons were believed to be rich, each year a heavy sum had to be paid out to a certain charity abroad, the charity to which the whole fortune was to go when the conditions of the will were no longer fulfilled. Mrs. Anson's reckless extravagance had made this a difficult task

to Hesketh Anson, who by degrees had been compelled, owing to his brother's increasing intemperance, to take the whole management of the estate on himself; and thus, to save his brother and his wife from public shame, he had been compelled to endure the odium of seeming a hard and grasping man of business. Year by year his own position had become more difficult, as his brother, driven by remorse—for conscience never quite died in his indolent and self-indulgent nature—yielded himself more completely to habits of intemperance, while each year the creature under their charge grew more difficult to control. At last Hesketh scarcely dared to leave the house at all. Each time he went away, the murderously mad thing, cunning as it was secretive, would break bounds, either through the drunken carelessness of Anson, or through the incapability of Washington or Hezekiah to manage him; and each time some one's life nearly paid the forfeit.

The only being for which it showed any affection was Hezekiah, and it had on more than one occasion nearly killed him, once—that time when Dolores had seen him—Hesketh Anson, who had just come in from a ride, only arriving in time.

He told Leila how disturbed he had been that day, when she had arrived at Moorlands. It had all been arranged by his sister-in-law without his knowledge, as they had agreed that for the future they would ask no more strangers into the house.

He had been out all that day, and on returning found that she was coming to Moorlands, learning also from her, though she suspected nothing, that the Grey Boy had escaped. That he should have made so daring an outbreak filled him with alarm. It was he who had found him at last after much searching, trying to enter her door that same night. So cunning and secret was the creature, that until the night of the tragedy, no one in the house suspected that he had found a way, hitherto unknown even to the Ansons, from his own part of the house to the room occupied by Dolores. The discovery explained much of the mystery in his comings and goings which had often puzzled them before.

"Heaven bless you!" said Hesketh Anson when she parted from him. Long after she remembered that he did not say good-bye. But he expressed no wish to meet her again, and the old stern self-repression had taken the place of the

curious tenderness into which that dreadful night he had been betrayed. When she left, she believed that that chapter of her life, as it concerned the Ansons, was closed for ever. But she took away with her a scarcely breathed hope that another and most beautiful one had opened for her. The last time she had seen Dr. Burton—the morning of the inquest—he had given her to understand that he looked forward to a speedy meeting. His look and his tone said far more than his words. Perhaps he meant it, for the moment. Certainly Leila believed in their truth. She carried their memory away with her; nor could Martha's bitter insults and accusations of blackmail which she cast at him shake her faith.

The poor woman was distracted with grief. They could scarcely induce her to leave the body of the dead child. She persisted in holding Leila partly responsible for her death, declaring that she had played into the hands of her lover, as she called Dr. Burton, and helped him in his efforts to pry out the secret, for the keeping of which he hoped to be paid. Leila, in consideration of her grief, overcame her own indignation, though she resented hotly the insinuations brought against Dr. Burton.

But the hope and the faith faded slowly out of her life as the days that followed her departure from Moorlands lengthened into weeks, and the weeks into months, and not a word nor sign came to change that beautiful possibility into happy reality. Then one day, in the monotonous existence she was leading in a respectable middle-class family, she took up a paper and read of his marriage.

He married a girl with money, and bought a fashionable practice in London, and became a popular and successful physician. Then, indeed, she felt that that strange, dark chapter in her life at Moorlands was closed for ever. She recovered her spirits as time went on. She was not one who could love where her

trust was shaken, and many things became clearer to her as her mind and powers of judgement were enlarged by experience and the years of womanhood. Looking back, without the glamour of the old faith, she could see that Martha had been right, only it was not she herself who had played the spy. That anonymous letter told her only too well, and the baseness of the tools he had employed filled her with scorn for him. She wondered how she could have been so blind.

And then one day, ten years from the day on which she had left Moorlands, Hesketh Anson was ushered into the sitting-room of the little home she had made for herself in London. She had just come in from her daily lessons. She worked hard, and though she was happy and contented enough, some of her prettiness had vanished; but in the eyes of the man who had waited for so many years, till the whole of that black shadow was lifted from his life and he had the right to ask her to be his wife, she had gained a fresh loveliness.

At first she could not understand it. That he had learned to love her in those dark days at Moorlands seemed incredible, and that he should have been so patiently faithful through all those years, not knowing whether she was married or not, or whether he could ever hope to win her, seemed still more wonderful. But he taught her to believe it at last, and as she learned the lesson she discovered how true and tender was the heart that had beaten under the apparent hardness and sternness which had once repelled her.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE	CHAP.	PAGE
I.—MISS ASTELL CONGRATULATES	1	IX.—GERARD LOSES HIS TEMPER	31
II.—"CONFOUND HIM!"	5	X.—FOUL PLAY	35
III.—"TÊTE-À-TÊTE"	9	XI.—S.C.A.M.P.	38
IV.—"WHERE CAN HE BE?"	13	XII.—"FOR YOUR SAKE"	41
V.—HOW IT HAPPENED	18	XIII.—A NEW DETECTIVE	45
VI.—A CLUE	20	XIV.—BROTHER AND SISTER	49
VII.—TOMMY ASKS QUESTIONS	23	XV.—THE LAST WITNESS	54
VIII.—THE CLUE FAILS	27	XVI.—DUAL SOLITUDE	59

CHAPTER I.

MISS ASTELL CONGRATULATES.

"Is Mrs. Cormack at home?"

Apparently the question was a mere matter of form. Without waiting for the prompt and respectful affirmative response of the footman before her, the speaker crossed the threshold of the big stone house. Apparently, also, she was by no means a stranger, for the man, having led the way along sundry rather over-decorated passages and thrown open a drawing-room door, did not ask the visitor's name but withdrew in silence.

The room was empty. It was a large square room, with a large fireplace in the wall at right angles to the door; a fireplace filled, on this June afternoon, with hot-house plants. Facing the door and facing the fireplace were wide mullioned windows, through which an expanse of typical Yorkshire country was visible. The room, like the passages, was over-decorated; the handsome furniture had apparently been

chosen entirely without reference to the character of the place, and there was a stiff conventionality about its arrangement.

Perhaps it was the subtle suggestion of vulgarity which pervaded the room; perhaps it was the equally subtle suggestion of concentration and self-absorption about her personality that made the figure of the new-comer seem curiously out of harmony with her surroundings. She had stopped abruptly as the footman closed the door; evidently not arrested by anything about the room, at which, indeed, she did not glance, but evidently under that mental influence which at the same moment intensified the set of her lips and released a strange momentary flash in her eyes. Then she moved, and walking slowly across to the window stood there looking away over the country with intent, unseeing eyes.

She was a tall woman, and she moved and stood with that dignity of carriage at once proud and unconscious which is only produced when individual temperament has been influenced by an instinctive sense

of good birth and good breeding. Except that she was certainly no longer a girl it would have been difficult to arrive at any conclusion as to her age from her appearance; for she was at that stage of her physical development when age seems to be entirely subservient to personality. She was very handsome, and the beautifully chiselled features were sensitive and strong—more sensitive, it seemed, to expression of scorn or disdain than to gentler emotions, judging from the look which stole over her pale face and into her large dark eyes as she gazed out over the sunny landscape. Her small, well-poised head was crowned with that rare loveliness—fine, soft, perfectly black hair. She was very simply dressed in a tailor-made gown, but every detail about her was perfect of its kind.

The door behind her opened with a rattle and a click, the strange intensity passed out of her face on the instant and she turned quietly.

"Now, my dear Magdalen, I call this really fortunate! I said to Louisa, 'Shall we go for a drive?' and she said, 'No, some one is sure to call,' and so we didn't! And how are you, my dear?"

The speech was terminated by a vigorous embrace, and then the speaker subsided into an arm-chair and began to fan herself violently.

She was an elderly woman, and it was obvious at the first glance that it would have better becomed her if her hair had not been golden. There was also a frank artificiality about her complexion from which her honest and kindly little eyes twinkled out most inharmoniously. She was dressed in an arrangement of silk and lace which made her ridiculously like a piece of her own drawing-room "suite." Her speech was a combination of great natural volubility and a caricature of the tone and accent of what she would have designated as "good society"; the result, to those who met Mrs. Cormack for the first time, was apt to be startling.

Her visitor, however, only smiled slightly, and settled herself in a chair with a careless composure that was, evidently, habitual to her.

"I thought you would probably be ready to be welcomed home by this afternoon," she said. Her voice was beautifully modulated, but perhaps a little too clear and cold. "I need not tell you how glad I am to welcome you."

"Very nice of you to say so, my dear!"

was the reply. "To tell the truth, I did think of you when Louisa said some one might call. Yes, and it seems quite funny to be back here again after all the travelling and racketing that we've had, don't you know! Nine months it is since we started off; and on the go, so to speak, all the time! And how have you been all this time; and what's the news down here?"

The words were uttered in a tone in which kindly condescension struggled with importance and triumph, and the beautiful lips of Mrs. Cormack's visitor curved into a slight smile.

"I am always in rude health, as you know, my dear Mrs. Cormack; and the news in these parts is not usually of a startling character, as I think you must remember even after a nine months' absence. Your doings are likely to be more interesting than mine." She met her hostess's eyes as she spoke with another slight smile that was not without meaning, and Mrs. Cormack laughed cheerily.

"Well, that's true, I expect," she answered. "Wedding news is always interesting, isn't it! I tell Basil he'll be quite a lion! Won't he, now?"

The large dark eyes were still meeting Mrs. Cormack's calmly, and before she answered, the younger woman lifted the tassel of her sunshade, and let it run carelessly through her fingers.

"Is it wedding news?" she said, with a slight emphasis on the third word.

"Oh, well, it's a preliminary, isn't it! Brenda won't hear of the marriage, you know, until after the twelve months from her father's death, and they've only been engaged a month. Just a month it is since it all happened! Dear me, Magdalen, and when I saw you last, my dear, I was quite put out at having to take charge of the child, wasn't I? Now, do tell me, were you surprised when you heard of it? My dear, when Louisa and I first began to see it coming on with Basil, you might have knocked us down with a feather, I assure you! There! I was pleased! I'd begun to be afraid that Basil wasn't the marrying sort. Shouldn't you have said so, now?"

"Mr. Cormack had that character, certainly."

"So, of course, I should have been glad to see him married to any one almost—any one of our own position I mean, my dear—let alone such a nice sweet girl as Brenda! Where is she, I wonder? You'd like to see her, I know."

Apparently the younger woman's ears were very much quicker than those of her hostess, for while the latter was yet speaking, her visitor had turned as if she heard something and fixed her eyes upon the door. She did not attempt to reply, and in another instant the door opened, and two people came in together.

The first was a curiously faded reproduction of Mrs. Cormack herself: a meek-looking old lady, with no exuberance either of looks or manner. With her the visitor shook hands, greeting her as Miss Brown. The other was a girl of three-and-twenty, a pretty, slight figure in a grey cotton frock, and as she came rather shyly towards the group by the window, Mrs. Cormack beamed upon her and said:

"Brenda, my dear, I was just wondering where you could have got to! Here is our nearest neighbour and oldest and greatest friend, almost, in these parts, has come to see us—Miss Astell. Magdalen, this is Miss Brenda Stansfield, who you've heard of."

Miss Astell had turned from Miss Brown, and had risen to her feet. During this irregularly worded introduction she had faced the girl, her eyes resting deliberately on the pretty, youthful face, which flushed hotly under their scrutiny. As Mrs. Cormack finished, she held out her hand carelessly.

"So glad to meet you!" she said. "Yes, of course I have heard a great deal about you. Indeed, you have been quite a public benefactor in these parts for some weeks!"

There was a shy and rather incoherent response in a soft girlish voice, and Miss Brenda Stansfield, who was evidently too much embarrassed by her interlocutor to have much comprehension of what was said to her, obviously intended to slip into a secluded corner. But such was not Miss Astell's intention for her, and she went on talking, as she repeated herself with a little gesture that gave the girl no choice but to sit down close by.

"If you have ever lived in the country," she said, with a smile—her eyes still fixed remorselessly on the girl's burning face—"you will know how great a boon you confer when you give your fellow-creatures something to talk about. The news of which you are the centre has quite superseded the weather and the crops as a topic of conversation for many miles round."

She spoke with that somewhat cold

suavity which emphasizes so remorselessly the difference between well-assured womanhood and ill-assured girlhood; and it was with an evident effort that the girl beside her collected herself to say, with a nervous little laugh:

"I'm afraid I don't appreciate the position much!"

"Oh, you will!" was the calm answer. "You will in time."

Miss Astell broke off to take some tea from the footman who presented himself and his tray before her at the moment, and the girl stole a glance at the beautiful profile thus turned towards her—a glance of admiration, but hardly of prepossession—while Mrs. Cormack said with cheery meaning:

"You can take shelter, you know, Brenda. It doesn't all come on you."

"Exactly!" continued Miss Astell. "You can take shelter. And where is the shelter this afternoon, Miss Stansfield? Why is he not here to protect you?"

"I don't know—I mean I have not seen him since lunch," faltered the girl shyly; and Mrs. Cormack broke in:

"Why, he's in the library, isn't he? William can't have told him you were here, my dear. Louisa"—turning to Miss Brown—"just ring the bell, will you, and we'll send for him."

But Miss Astell interposed with a movement of her hand.

"How unkind, Mrs. Cormack!" she said. "When Miss Stansfield says that she has not seen Mr. Cormack since lunch! Why don't you ask her to fetch him?" She turned to the girl again, fixing her eyes once more on her face as she said coolly: "Will you tell Mr. Cormack that an old friend would like to congratulate him?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Brenda Stansfield, as though dominated by the superior self-possession of the speaker, rose with a murmured assent, and left the room.

Miss Astell laughed a little as she disappeared.

"Perhaps that was more amiable than wise in me!" she said. "It will be some time before they appear, probably! What a pretty little girl, my dear Mrs. Cormack, and how young—eighteen or nineteen, I gather from her manner! Three-and-twenty? Really?"

"She's rather shy, you see," said Mrs. Cormack, a note of apology forcing itself into her voice before the uplifted eyebrows

with which Miss Astell spoke the last word. "But she is a sweet girl! It's such a pleasure to me to think of having him and her settled close by I can't tell you! You've heard that Basil's going to take Arsdale—only a seven miles' drive from here, you know! In fact, he's all but done it. He—there now, Magdalen, they've behaved better than you gave them credit for!"

The door had opened on Mrs. Cormack's exclamation, and the last words, though nominally addressed to Miss Astell, were actually transferred to Brenda Stansfield, who was coming towards them still blushing prettily. Miss Astell was looking straight across the room, with an odd little smile just touching her lips.

Following Brenda Stansfield was a man. He was tall and well set-up, presumably about five-and-thirty years old, and conspicuously good-looking in a fair, straight-featured style. His face was very still, almost apathetic, as were all of his very deliberate movements. His mouth was hidden by a fair moustache, and he had rather curious eyes. They were grey eyes, excessively wide open, and they had no expression of any kind.

He came straight across the room to Miss Astell, who watched his approach still with that odd little smile on her face, and as he reached her she held out her hand without rising.

"You have come to be congratulated," she said. "That's very nice of you. How do you do after all this long time?"

"How are you?"

The conventional response was uttered in just the slow, dispassionate tone of voice which might have been expected from Mr. Basil Cormack's personality. As he made it he seated himself in the same deliberate fashion, and Miss Astell went on, her clear, cool voice perhaps a shade cooler than usual.

"I hope Miss Stansfield told you that it was my consideration that made her your mother's messenger, Mr. Cormack? One likes to have one's little amiabilities appreciated, and Mrs. Cormack was actually going to cast the pearl of opportunity before William!"

"Brenda told me that you were kind enough to wish to see me."

"And you meet my wishes with a promptitude which is truly admirable. I ought to say something very charming in return, ought I not? But I'm afraid Miss Stansfield would not like me if I said what I thought in her presence"—this with a

glance and a smile to the girl—"so please imagine all that is nice and congratulatory."

"Thanks, very much!"

"Mrs. Cormack tells me that you have bought Arsdale. That means that you are tired of travelling, I suppose?"

"I suppose so—yes. I have not actually bought the place yet, though."

"Ah, but you mean to!" Miss Astell rose as she spoke. "Well, I have caused you to be dragged from your lair for a very little while, you see. I must go, I'm afraid, Mrs. Cormack. It is so nice to have you back again!"

"But you needn't run away in such a great hurry, my dear, surely. Why, you've got a lot to hear yet, and there's all your news we haven't heard. Come, now, sit down again, and we'll have a really comfortable chat."

Miss Astell made an eloquent little gesture of negation.

"Impossible!" she said lightly. "I only just looked in for a few minutes. So sorry! Good-bye! Good-bye, Miss Stansfield!"

She offered her hand to the girl with the same strange directness of gaze with which she had received her, and then she turned to Mr. Cormack. He moved across the room to open the door for her, evidently intending to see her to the front door, and with another light word or two of farewell she passed out of the room before him.

But after the drawing-room door was shut, Miss Astell spoke not another word; nor did she even glance round, as she walked with a quick step along the passage, at her imperturbably silent escort; and when at last she turned and faced him by the hall door, there was a strange tensely about her handsome face, and her eyes were flashing. The footman was holding the door open for her, and she held out her hand.

"Good-bye!" she said. And without another word or a single backward glance she went away down the broad flight of steps and along the drive.

Whorlbeck Hall was one of those great houses which make a kind of landmark in the country for miles round, just as the doings of their owners form a prominent feature in those local chronicles which are compiled day by day in every country place, by word of mouth. Everybody knew the house itself, in its ugly, ponderous magnificence, and everybody knew everything that happened in the family of its owners, the Cormacks.

The place had been built some twenty years before, as every child in the neighbouring village knew, by old Mr. Cormack, the present Basil Cormack's father. Old Mr. Cormack had been a self-made man who had risen from a very humble rank of life in Manchester, and had made for himself an enormous fortune. He had bought the estate from the Astell family, whose fortunes at the time of Mr. Cormack's appearance on the scene, were, after unnumbered years of possession and prosperity, rapidly declining. And in the course of the transaction Mr. Cormack had "done something"—here the records became vague—of a conspicuously honourable or generous nature which had led to a firm alliance between the new owner and the old—an alliance which had survived with the remaining members of either family after the death of the contracting parties, in one of those curious intimacies of custom or habit so inexplicable to lookers-on. In this instance the faculty for wonderment had been so greatly exercised in the onlookers by the original alliance that it had completely exhausted itself. The friendly relation between the Astells, aristocratic to the backbone in everything but title, and good vulgar Mr. Cormack and his kindly vulgar wife, had become the simplest matter of course with the rapidity with which facts do become a matter of course.

Old Mr. Cormack and old Mr. Astell had died within six months of one another, twelve years after the building of Whorlbeck Hall. Since then Mrs. Cormack, to whom the house had been left, had lived in it for such months of the year as were not to be spent in dazzling, and being dazzled by, London society. With her lived her sister, Miss Louisa Brown. Her son and only child—a young man of seven-and-twenty when his father died—had lived, nominally, in London since that event. But, as a matter of fact, Basil Cormack was very seldom to be found in his comfortable rooms in St. James's Street. Neither was he often at Whorlbeck Hall for more than a day or two together. His time was spent in a curiously rushing and restless fashion—a week in Italy, six months at the Cape; a short sojourn in New York; this was the way in which Basil Cormack's years went by. And the neighbourhood defined this, his leading characteristic, as "Mr. Cormack's extraordinary passion for going about."

Incidents had been rare in the Cormack family since the great event of the master's death, and the country-side had consequently been considerably moved, after eight years of such famine, by the introduction of another figure into the family circle. A cousin of Mrs. Cormack's, who had married, as that worthy lady would once have expressed it, "very high," died a widow, leaving a daughter without, as it appeared, a connexion in the world excepting Mrs. Cormack. For some time the girl had lived with friends of her mother's, and then circumstances had so fallen out that Mrs. Cormack offered to take charge of her, and the offer was gratefully accepted. Miss Brenda Stansfield was only introduced to the Whorlbeck people by hearsay, as a matter of fact, for another small excitement had resulted on her appearance, metaphorically speaking. Mrs. Cormack had determined to spend the winter abroad, and had disappeared early in October with much pomp and paraphernalia.

And in the following May the neighbourhood was thrilled to its centre by the tidings that Mr. Basil Cormack, who was known to have spent the winter with his mother, was engaged to her charge, Miss Brenda Stansfield, and that he had actually taken Arsdale House, a large house in the neighbourhood.

"And of course," said people, on the report of a loquacious farmer's wife who had chanced to see Miss Astell on her way up to the Hall on that June afternoon, "of course, Miss Astell would be the first to congratulate."

## CHAPTER II. "CONFOUND HIM!"

ABOUT a mile and a half lay between Whorlbeck Hall and the house known as Whorlbeck Cottage, which old Mr. Astell, a widower even when the Cormacks appeared upon the scene, had left to his daughter, together with a slender income. Whorlbeck lay in the midst of a beautiful tract of characteristic Yorkshire scenery. The Hall itself was in a sheltered, wooded valley, between two great expanses of heathery moor. On either side of the moors sprang up height after height of low hills, melting at length into the dim blue of the horizon, which was broken here and there by the deeper blue of a higher peak. In the foreground was the little sparkling beck from which the place took its name. It crossed and recrossed



the road like a silver thread, and then lost itself in the thick belt of trees at the back of Whorlbeck Cottage. On this June day the summer sunlight was painting everything with gorgeous, perfect colour. But apparently familiarity had blunted Miss Astell's sense of the beauty around her, for as she walked swiftly along she glanced neither to the right nor to the left. Nor, judging from the expression of her face, did she even see the view on which her eyes were fixed. She pushed open her garden gate, and, with the same hard preoccupation about her, went on rapidly through the garden, through the hall, and on to the foot of the stairs.

"Where's the tearing hurry, Magda?"

With a start so violent that in a woman less finely tempered it must have found expression in a cry, Miss Astell faced round. Standing on the threshold of a room opening on to the hall was a young man, and as she saw him an exclamation of amazement broke from her.

"Gerard! How in the world did you come here?"

The young man laughed, not very pleasantly.

"Many thanks for the welcome," he said, and his voice was curiously like and yet unlike Miss Astell's own cool tones. "I came to Helstone in the usual baking apparatus, and from Helstone I have come on my feet. The proceeding being, though doubtless laudable, exceedingly heating, I'm now refreshing myself with a drink."

He moved as he spoke, and Miss Astell followed him into the room from which he had emerged. It was a dining-room, very well furnished with real old oak, and on the table was a tray containing the necessary apparatus for whiskey-and-sodas. On an arm-chair at the foot of the table lay a rough Skye terrier; his tongue was hanging out of his mouth, and he was panting exceedingly as he cocked up one ear at the young man's entrance.

"Why did you not let me know?" demanded Miss Astell.

"Because I didn't know myself," was the laconic response; and the young man turned his attention to his half-empty tumbler.

Contrasts between brother and sister are not rare, but a stronger contrast than that between Gerard Astell and his sister—only son and only daughter of their parents—it would be impossible to imagine. Their father had been wont to say that Magdalen had her brother's share of good looks as

well as her own. Gerard was short, slight, and brown—"wiry" was the word that best described his physique—and he was as ugly as a set of hopelessly irregular features could make him. He had brown eyes with a twinkle in them, set rather deeply in his head, and he wore a little dark moustache. At this particular moment he was very unbecomingly hot, and the physical relaxation engendered by fatigue seemed to bring out something rather reckless about his expression, as well as some harassed lines about his mouth. The only point in which his personality touched that of his sister was in a certain unconscious air of good breeding and refinement which, differently as it expressed itself, was essentially the same in both.

"Good!" he exclaimed with a sigh of content as he put down his empty tumbler. "Now I'll have a tub and a snooze, and be ready for dinner. By Jove, I am beat!"

"It is only five miles from Helstone," observed Miss Astell coldly. "Not much for a man, I should have thought."

"Depends on the man's condition, you see," returned her brother. "Dinner at seven? All right. Come on, Scamp." And the terrier, whose bright eyes had never stirred from his master, jumped from the chair instantly.

Cool and refreshed, Gerard Astell appeared to greater advantage two hours later when he strolled into the dining-room sprucely got up in semi-evening dress; but the shadow of care of some sort was still upon his face. He had to wait a minute or two before Miss Astell appeared. She was wearing a black dinner dress, which made her beauty even more conspicuous than her morning dress had done; but she was very pale, and the set look, broken up for the moment by the surprise of her brother's arrival, was more pronounced than ever.

Neither brother nor sister alluded again to Gerard's unexpected arrival. Erratic proceedings were evidently characteristic with him, and to be accepted as a matter of course. They talked in an easy distant fashion of London, where the brother practised as a barrister—briefless, for the most part—and where the sister spent several weeks of each year; and of mutual friends and acquaintance there. No local topic presented itself until the servant had left the room, and then Gerard said carelessly, holding his glass of claret to the light as he spoke:

"When did the Cormacks come down?"

Miss Astell's fingers were daintily removing the stalks from some strawberries, and her attention was somewhat absorbed in her occupation as she returned:

"Yesterday—no, the day before."

"Seen them yet?"

"Yes, I called this afternoon. Mrs. Cormack is semi-delirious with rapture, poor old soul!"

Gerard Astell looked across the table rather blankly. His attention also seemed to be hardly concentrated on the conversation.

"What about?" he said.

"What about?" echoed his sister. She was crushing her strawberries now with a slow, deliberate movement. "My dear Gerard, Basil Cormack's engagement, of course. Not a very exciting young woman, it seemed to me—she was produced for inspection."

A curious flash of expression that looked almost like a sudden remembrance passed across Gerard's face. The shadow of pre-occupied anxiety which had rested upon it throughout the meal did not immediately settle down again as he turned his glass slowly round on the table.

"Of course," he said, "of course. Miss Stansfield: A pretty girl, Magda—awfully pretty!"

Miss Astell looked up at her brother quickly.

"Do you know her?" she asked.

"I was in Paris when they were there in April, don't you know, and I saw a good deal of them. By Jove, it was a rum thing to see that girl in double harness with jolly old Mrs. Cormack! It's not the same breed—you saw that, of course!"

"She seemed—inoffensive."

"She's thoroughbred," was the emphatic response. "And she's going to marry Cormack. Well!"

It was a curious nondescript ejaculation, and it was succeeded by a silence. It was growing dusk, and Gerard's face was hardly distinguishable; but Miss Astell did not look up, she was still crushing her strawberries with an absorbed, concentrated movement, though they had long since become pulp.

With a sudden gesture, Gerard moved and stretched out his hand for the decanter. He seemed to be throwing something from him, and his voice as he spoke was light and easy.

"He's a good fellow," he said. "Odd, of course, but an awfully good sort. It's

no unkindness to our old friends if one wonders now and then how he comes to be such a gentleman."

'With a sharp swift movement Miss Astell rose from her seat and walked to the window. Her back was towards her brother as she said in a strange, low voice:

"Have you come down to borrow money of Basil Cormack?"

An exclamation of astonishment that was almost an oath broke from Gerard, and he turned sharply towards her.

"What the dickens do you mean?" he said.

"Do you think I don't know? You've borrowed money of him again and again for your contemptible pleasures—your racing, gambling, or whatever it is. You are heavily in his debt at this moment."

"How the——how do you know? Who told you?"

Miss Astell laughed harshly. "Oh, not your creditor!" she said. "He is 'such a gentleman,' you know! You've told me yourself—told me over and over again, so that I should have been a fool if I had not understood."

The twinkle in Gerard Astell's eyes was evidently borne out by an easy-going tendency in his temperament. There was a moment's pause, and then he laughed.

"You're comfoundedly 'cute!" he said. "Hang it all, what an ass I must be! But there, I don't know that it matters much."

"Have you come down to borrow money of Basil Cormack?"

"That's my concern!" was the answer, given with a sudden flash of anger which seemed to be the outcome of some inward irritability. "Hang it, why shouldn't I borrow of Cormack if I like?"

"Because if you were a man you would rather starve than take his money!"

The words flashed out suddenly and fiercely, and as she spoke them Miss Astell turned and faced her brother, one clenched hand resting on the window frame, her handsome head thrown proudly back, her face a beautiful white outline only, in the twilight, except for her gleaming eyes. Her whole figure seemed to vibrate with the passionate intensity with which she had spoken, and for a moment her brother gazed at her in speechless amazement. Then as she turned abruptly away he gave a low whistle and said:

"By Jove, Magda, you do dislike him!"

There was a moment's silence, and then Miss Astell said "Yes!"

The next instant she turned again with a graceful movement of supreme carelessness:

"I suppose it is of no use to expect you to be influenced by my prejudices," she said in her coolest tones. "Only, when you are in difficulties don't say that I did not warn you! Would you like to smoke in the garden?"

Hardly waiting for his mechanical acquiescence she moved across the room and out into the hall. And as Gerard, following her slowly with Scamp as usual at his heels, reached the threshold, he saw her stop suddenly and then go through the open hall door towards two figures which were coming up the garden.

"Miss Brown!" she said, as she met them. "How nice! And Miss Stansfield!" Again that curious flash of expression passed across Gerard Astell's face. He thrust his cigar-case back into his pocket and moved quickly towards the group in the garden. Miss Astell heard his footstep on the gravel.

"My brother surprised me this afternoon, Miss Brown!" she said. "Miss Stansfield, I have been much interested to hear that you and he are old acquaintances!"

Gerard was shaking hands with the old lady by this time, and as he did so it was evident that he was by no means at his best with his sister. His manner to Miss Brown was a charming mixture of deference and "chaff," and she received him with a timid effusion which told that he was a favourite with her. He turned from her to Brenda Stansfield, and there was something almost shy beneath his ease of manner.

"It's awfully jolly for me to renew our acquaintance," he said. "And Scamp feels the same, you see," glancing down at the dog, who was gazing up at the girl with his intelligent eyes and wagging his tail madly. "His manners won't allow him to jump up, but he hopes you'll speak to him."

Brenda Stansfield uttered a little exclamation of affection and knelt down on the grass.

"Dear boy!" she said. "Shake hands, then! How are you? Isn't he a dear, Miss Astell?" she added, glancing up rather shyly. "He and I are great friends, aren't we, Scamp?"

Brenda was wearing a big garden-hat, and a soft wrap over her dinner dress. Her face was very girlish, untouched as yet by any strong expression, and almost

like a child's in colouring. She had soft curling brown hair and simple, straightforward blue eyes, and as she knelt there by the dog, looking up into the faces above her, a little flushed with pleasure, or shyness, or both together, she made a very charming picture. Apparently both Miss Astell and her brother thought so, for they looked down at her without speaking. There was no silence, for a quivering ripple of "Good doggie! Poor fellow! Good doggie!" was contributed by little Miss Brown, but the girl rose rather suddenly to her feet and there was an added shyness about her as she said to Miss Astell:

"We came with a message from Aunt Sarah."

The message which she proceeded to deliver prettily, but with some constraint, bore reference to an expedition to a neighbouring waterfall which Mrs. Cormack proposed for the following day, and in which she hoped Miss Astell might join them. Miss Astell, however, was engaged, "most unfortunately," as she said with her enigmatical little smile.

"How good of you to come down!" Miss Astell continued. "Come and sit down, do! There are some chairs under that tree, Gerard. Miss Brown, you are a great walker, I know, but you will be tired."

She led the way to the place she had indicated, but once there she left the conduct of the conversation entirely to Gerard; and Gerard addressed himself mainly to Miss Brown, talking of Paris and their joint doings there, turning now and then with a "Do you remember?" or "Wasn't it so?" to the slight figure next him. Miss Brown must have been easily satisfied, for when she rose in about twenty minutes, she declared with meek eagerness that she had had a most delightful talk. Personally, she had scarcely opened her lips. As she moved, Gerard disappeared, and by the time her speech was finished he was back again, hat in hand.

"May I see you up to the Hall?" he asked; and he cut short Miss Brown's protestations with a smile that made his ugly face look very pleasant.

"You don't suppose I should let you and Miss Stansfield go back unprotected?" he said. "Besides"—the smile died out suddenly—"I want to see Basil!" He held the gate open for them without glancing at his sister, and walked away at Brenda Stansfield's side.

Miss Astell stood, straight and tall, by the garden gate and watched them out of sight; stood gazing after them long after they had disappeared. Gradually her breathing began to quicken, her great eyes burnt and shone, and her lips were white with the force with which they were compressed. At last she turned and began to walk up and down the garden with a graceful, regular step that was oddly suggestive of a tigress. An hour passed, and she had never paused. A servant came out of the house to her.

"Shall we sit up, miss?" she said.

"No," said Miss Astell. She did not turn her head to the woman or pause in her walk as she spoke. "Mr. Gerard will shut up."

Another hour passed, and a man's step became faintly audible coming down the road. She stopped abruptly and listened as it came nearer and nearer. Then she went into the house, and sat down in the drawing-room. A moment later the door was flung open, and Gerard appeared. But it was quite another Gerard to the man who had gone away two hours before. The pleasant, ugly face was black with anger. Everything that was good in it was utterly submerged beneath a moroseness which was not without desperation.

"I'm going back to town by the first train to-morrow!" he said, flinging the words out savagely. "Don't sit up for me, I'm going to smoke."

His sister looked up coolly into his face.

"Have you seen Basil Cormack?" she asked.

"Yes, confound him!"

The door slammed violently, and Miss Astell was alone again. She stood for a moment motionless, and a gleam like a smile came into her eyes.

"He has refused him!" she said to herself. She paused a moment, and the gleam came again. "Confound him!" she said. "Is that a relief, I wonder; to a man?"

She opened the door, and went upstairs to her room.

#### CHAPTER III. A TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

"So it's really quite finished; servants in, you know, and all. Dear me, Basil has been in a fidget to get it done. Haven't you, Basil? And we are to drive over to-morrow to see it."

It was a hot afternoon in August, six weeks later, and in the shade of a group

of trees, at the end of one of the smooth green lawns of Whorlbeck Hall, sat Mrs. Cormack in a wicker chair. She was looking very hot, and her white dress, profusely trimmed with lace, taken in conjunction with her much-powdered, beaming face, seemed rather to accentuate the warmth of her appearance. Facing her, leaning back gracefully in a lounging-chair, was Miss Astell, to whom her words had been addressed. Her pale, careless face, and her slender figure in its cotton dress, were like coolness personified. The group was completed by Basil Cormack. His hands were loosely locked behind his head; he looked absolutely imperturbable, absolutely uninterested; his expressionless grey eyes were placidly fixed on the afternoon sky; it was impossible to believe that he ever had been or ever could be in a "fidget."

Miss Astell turned her head and looked at him.

"You have been very quick over it," she said. "There must have been a good deal to do to the house."

He made a gesture of assent.

"Yes," he said, in his slow, indifferent manner. "I had a fancy to get it done, though."

"And now that it's all so handsome, and he's spent untold sums in having it finished in such a hurry, he talks of not living there," proclaimed Mrs. Cormack, as one whose incredulous astonishment is not to be repressed. "Not at first, at any rate."

Miss Astell stretched up her hand and pulled down a bough of the tree above her.

"Really!" she said calmly. "And what do you propose to do, then, Mr. Cormack?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Basil Cormack answered lazily:

"I shall travel, I think."

"And will Miss Stansfield like that?"

"Dear Brenda!" broke in Mrs. Cormack, with cheery affection. "She is delighted, of course. Everything is delightful to her, you know. And I suppose, after all, a winter at Arsdale wouldn't be a very cheerful thing."

"Winter!" repeated Miss Astell. She had looked up quickly. "Oh, is it to be soon then?"

Mrs. Cormack laughed mysteriously and triumphantly.

"Well, it isn't absolutely settled," she said, with a glance at her immovable son.

"But perhaps before long. Look, here's Brenda coming to us, and Tommy!"

As though the last word were a surprise to her, Miss Astell lifted her head and glanced over her shoulder. Coming along the lawn was Brenda Stansfield, and by her side, progressing, quite regardless of the heat, in little skips and bounds, and obviously chattering as fast as his tongue would wag, was a small boy in a white sailor suit.

"Who is Tommy?" enquired Miss Astell.

"There!" said Mrs. Cormack, "I never told you about him, did I, Magdalen? He belongs to some cousins of my poor husband's that have nine children, and have just lost the little money they had. And he's dying, if I'm not mistaken. His chest will never see him through next winter, poor man! So she's half distracted with worry, and Tommy's come to stay with us for a bit. And if he's not a little Turk!"

By this time the little voice of the little Turk was distinctly audible.

"It's dreadfully miserable, Brenda, that you're going to be married to Cousin Basil, because you and me would have been married, wouldn't we, and Aunt Sarah would have let us live in that nice little tiny house where the cocks and hens live. Wouldn't you, Aunt Sarah?"

He was jumping up and down like a piece of quicksilver in front of Mrs. Cormack with the last words, and as Brenda, laughing and flushed, held out her hand to Miss Astell, the latter said, with a laugh:

"What a desirable residence, Miss Stansfield! Don't you think you'd better give up Arsdale?"

Brenda smiled constrainedly. The past six weeks, though they had involved a considerable amount of intercourse with Miss Astell, had evidently by no means lessened the girl's shyness with the handsome woman. She seemed, indeed, even more ill at ease with her as an acquaintance than she had been as a stranger. Her hesitating uncertainty only increased now, and she turned for refuge to Basil. He had risen to give her his chair, and she sat down with a pretty look and a gesture of thanks.

"Basil," she said, "I've promised to ask you if Tommy may come with us to Arsdale to-morrow. He wants——"

"I wants to see the place where Brenda's going to live," broke in Tommy excitedly. "Ellen says"—Ellen was his nurse—

"it's the beautifullest place, and"—he gasped with excitement—"she says there's ponds and fishes."

"Are you fond of fishes?" demanded Miss Astell, fixing her cool gaze upon the child. As though a prolonged stare were the most desirable form of introduction to his mind, Tommy proceeded to contemplate his interlocutor for several seconds. Then he nodded emphatically.

"Yes," he said. But he addressed the amplification of this statement to Mrs. Cormack. "There was a fish in a pool at Scarborough once, when I went there," he said with breathless interest; "a little fish, all slippery, and he jumped right away. May I see Brenda's fishes, Aunt Sarah? I want to."

"Yes, my dear, to be sure you may," responded Mrs. Cormack. "That's to say if you'll be a good boy. And what I was going to say, Magdalen, my dear, and I don't know why I haven't said it before," she continued, turning to Miss Astell, "is, won't you come over with us? Basil and Brenda think of riding, so we shall be as comfortable as can be in the carriage. We're going to start about eleven, and Basil's going to give us some lunch, and then we shall drive back quietly to dinner. Now do come! I would like you to see the place."

Miss Astell leaned back once more indolently in her chair.

"The place?" she said. "Yes, I've not been there since the Cunninghams had it and gave those dances. By-the-bye, Mr. Cormack, why don't you give a dance before you go on your travels?" She paused, but Basil Cormack only answered with a careless, unmeaning gesture, and she went on: "It's very kind of you, Mrs. Cormack, but it's by way of being a family party, isn't it? Should I not be in the way?" There was an odd little inflection in her voice. Mrs. Cormack laughed loudly and cordially. "No! Well—thanks, I should like it immensely."

She rose to take leave as she spoke, and Mrs. Cormack rose also.

"That's capital," she said. "And I shouldn't wonder, my dear, if I had a bit of news for you to-morrow. I don't mind telling you I'm sure of it."

She glanced with ponderous shyness at the engaged couple, and Miss Astell followed the glance.

"Oh," she said coolly, "that will be very interesting!"

That Mrs. Cormack not only had a "bit of news," but that she was positively devoured by a desire to impart it, was obvious, when on the following morning she came out to the carriage that had already fetched Miss Astell from the Cottage. Miss Brown followed her, and Tommy skipped and hopped in front. She greeted Miss Astell, and settled the party in the carriage with a volubility and turbulence evidently born of excitement.

"There!" she said, as the carriage rolled away along the road. "Now I can tell you comfortably, my dear. So flurried I get, thinking of it. The wedding day's fixed! There never was such a man as Basil for taking fancies and sticking to them, and it's to be in six weeks—the twenty-first of September. In no time, isn't it!" Mrs. Cormack paused, but rather to take breath than with any wish for a reply, and then went on expansively. "They're going away directly after the wedding—for the winter, I mean, not just for the honeymoon. That's a sad pity, isn't it, but I expect we shall go abroad, too. There's a great deal more on the Continent we didn't have time for, last time. And Basil was ever so taken with your suggestion about a dance, and he's going to give one—a kind of house-warming, you know, only, of course, that oughtn't to be until after he is married—just before the wedding. A regular big affair, you know. Aradale's just the place for it. He settled it all last night."

"Exactly," assented Miss Astell. "What an excitement for the neighbourhood—a dance and a wedding!"

Certainly a loquacious lady could hardly have had a happier time than Mrs. Cormack enjoyed for the ensuing hour and a half. Tommy was established at his own fervent entreaty on the box between the coachman and footman; Miss Brown was always a convenient recipient of a monologue; and Miss Astell, leaning back in her corner, watching the landscape with absent eyes, only exerted herself to put in the brief monosyllables necessary to support Mrs. Cormack's flow of talk. Neither her attitude nor the nonchalance of her expression had varied in the least, when, on Mrs. Cormack's exclamation, "Dear me, here we are!" she roused herself and turned to look at the house they were rapidly approaching.

Aradale was a remarkably fine specimen of Jacobean architecture, admirably situated, and the process of "doing up" to

which it had recently been subjected had been skilfully carried out. Inside there was not a detail which was not complete and perfect. Even the final touch of life was not wholly wanting, for Basil Cormack had been living there on and off during the last six weeks—his presence hastened the workmen, he said; and the large staff of servants was in working order.

The most vociferous expressions of admiration were, of course, Mrs. Cormack's; and it was she who led the party as they passed from room to room, the master of the house sauntering indifferently in the rear. Basil Cormack seemed to take but scant interest in the many appreciative comments made in his hearing. He scarcely once spoke, unless directly spoken to, and his expressionless grey eyes rested with nonchalant, impersonal comprehension on all the work he had pressed forward so hard. There was an almost oppressed admiration on Brenda's face as she replied to the elder lady's comments and sallies. Miss Astell criticised and appreciated easily and freely, but she showed a not unnatural disinclination to repeat the tour of inspection more than twice over; and when in the cool of the afternoon Mrs. Cormack proposed to leave the shady retreat in the garden where they had been having tea, for what she called "just one more look round the house before we go," the handsome, dark head was languidly shaken.

"It's a delightful house, my dear Mrs. Cormack," she said; "but it's an even more delightful garden."

"Now, do you think so?" returned Mrs. Cormack. "Well, I must say I admire the house more. Well, you won't mind if I leave you, my dear, I know. Louisa, you and me'll go together."

"Have you had a happy day, Tommy?" asked Brenda as the two ladies disappeared.

Basil had no apparent intention of speaking, and Brenda evidently felt it behoved her to make conversation and yet found it difficult to think of anything to say to Miss Astell.

Tommy, who had just disposed in silence of several slices of what he called a "quite birthday sort of cake," was lying face downwards on the grass at Brenda's feet, meditatively kicking his small heels together. He rolled over on to his back and looked up into her face as he answered.

"I was just thinking," he said. "Yes, I believe I've had a lovely day, 'cept when we was indoors. The out-of-doors is jolly

here." He jumped up suddenly, his little figure alive with excitement. "Let's go and see the fishes again, Brenda," he cried. "Do! It makes my legs hurt dreadful when I sit still. Do come!"

"Shall we all go?" said Brenda, looking at Miss Astell.

Again Miss Astell shook her head.

"Don't let me keep you, though," she said.

Brenda glanced at Basil.

"I dare say you don't care about the fishes," she said with a smile. "I'll go with Tommy, and you and Miss Astell can keep one another company, Basil."

The tea-table had been set under a copper beech almost in the middle of the wide sweep of lawn, and it was a minute or two before Brenda and her small companion moving in the opposite direction to that of the house, passed out of sight. Miss Astell followed them with her eyes until the last flutter of Brenda's dress disappeared, and then she turned her head and looked at Basil Cormack as he sat in his favourite lounging attitude in a low chair. She did not speak at once. Gradually over her handsome face there came a curious change. The coolness became the deliberate, calculating coolness of unutterable contempt. Every line seemed to harden, and the depths of her dark eyes seemed slowly to reveal themselves as depths of unfathomable bitterness. At last she spoke. Her voice was pitched exactly as usual, neither lower nor higher, but it vibrated with a strange tensi-ty.

"Yes," she said slowly, "let us keep each other company."

Basil Cormack moved quietly and put his hand into his pocket.

"Do you mind a cigarette?" he said.

Such a light of white-hot passion leaped into the handsome woman's face as absolutely transfigured it. For an instant Miss Astell's blazing eyes, fixed upon the nonchalant figure of the man before her, looked as though they would have struck him dead. Then her face became as still as marble, white to the very lips.

"Smoke!" she said, "by all means. I will tell you a story." She stretched out one clenched hand and clasped it round the rough arm of her garden chair, pressing it as though the physical discomfort brought some positive satisfaction.

"Ten years ago," she began, in a low voice that was like the dropping of ice-cold water. "Ten years ago exactly, there were together, guests on board the yacht

of a mutual friend, a young man and a young woman. They were neighbours in their own homes, and there was a friendly feeling between their families. The young man having been little at home, however, they did not know each other well, and the making of one another's acquaintance was rather an interesting business. Do you remember?"

Basil Cormack had just lighted his cigarette. He paused to take the pull at it which assured him that it was burning, and Miss Astell watched him, a gleam coming into her eyes, which showed dangerously brilliant against the rigid calm of her face.

"Yes!" he said placidly.

"They fell in love!" continued Miss Astell, with a low, terrible laugh. "The man was an ardent wooer! The girl——" she stopped abruptly. "After an Arcadian week, in which each knew, or thought they knew, the other's mind, he spoke on the night before the girl's departure for home. He asked her to be his wife—it was moonlight, do you remember? And she, Heaven help her, kissed him."

With a turn of his wrist Basil Cormack waved the smoke from before his face, but Miss Astell did not see the gesture. She was staring before her with wide, dilated eyes. They were in a conspicuous position, easily visible from every side; and yet, as she leaned back in her chair, no one not near enough to see her face and the grip with which she clasped the arm of her chair, could have detected anything unusual in her pose or her manner.

"She went home," she went on, "believing that he would follow her in a week to go through the family formalities. She wrote to him, and she had one answer, glowing with what she took for love. Then she heard no more. She wrote again and again, to her undying self-contempt—the words seemed to be ground out between her clenched teeth—"and then she wrote no more. Three months passed, and then the man came home. They met as casual acquaintances."

Slowly, as though weighted with a scorn that could not get itself expressed, the last words fell from her white lips, and she fixed her eyes full upon him. They were sombre, almost lurid, as though the fire so rigidly repressed found there some faint expression. Basil Cormack moved restlessly on his chair and frowned slightly, then he leaned back again; his wide, expressionless eyes gazing straight before him.

"No one had heard anything," continued Miss Astell. "No one on the yacht had been told. No one knew. He was quite safe. The girl would have died sooner than humiliate herself by an exposure, and he took advantage of the fact to treat her from the first as though the episode were non-existent. They have never spoken of it from then until—now!"

She paused, and deliberately unclasped her fingers one by one from the arm of the chair, straightening them out and beating the palm of her hand heavily once or twice upon the gnarled wood.

"And now that your wedding-day is fixed, Basil Cormack," she said, "I am glad to tell you that—I remember. That you are to me as contemptible a thing as breathes upon the earth!"

He turned to her at last, still with no expression whatever in his fair, handsome face, his cigarette suspended in his hand.

"Wouldn't it be better to forget?" he said.

She gazed at him for a moment, her face quivering in an indefinable expression, and then, with a sudden, strange gesture, she threw up one arm as though to shut out his face as she turned her head wildly on the cushion of her chair.

"Basil!" she cried. "Oh, Basil! Basil!"

There was a moment of heavy dead silence, and then out of the distance came the girlish laugh of Brenda, mixing with Tommy's childish tones. Miss Astell heard it evidently, for a strong shudder shook her from head to foot. The voices came nearer, and she lifted her head and rose to her feet in one graceful movement. Her face was ashen, and the great dark eyes looked blind, but she was quite composed. She strolled across the lawn to the house.

#### CHAPTER IV. "WHERE CAN HE BE?"

THE August days ran out, the three first weeks of September followed in their wake, and as the date fixed for "the Cormack wedding," as it was called, drew nearer, that function, and the dance at Arsdale which was to precede it, became the all-absorbing topics of interest in the country round.

By one of those odd freaks for which it is impossible to account, the dance gradually superseded the wedding as a subject of excitement, even in the estimation of the people most concerned. With that strange tendency to become possessed by one

idea which was one of his characteristics, and which he evinced in an immovable tenacity which in no way clashed with the imperturbability of his demeanour, Basil Cormack had concentrated himself upon the idea of the dance from the first. He was evidently determined to spare neither money nor pains in making it such an event as had hardly been known in the county before; and as his preparations fired his immediate family to elated excitement, so the rumours of them stirred the whole neighbourhood. A wedding in the country—even the most elaborate—offers but limited chances of excitement. But about a dance in the country—a dance over which money is actually lavished—there is the transcendent charm of rarity, and the possibilities presented are practically limitless.

And when the night came, nobody could have denied that every possibility was fully realised. The whole of the ground floor of the house—the fine old hall, the beautiful drawing-room, the library, the dining-room, and a large room added by the last owner of the place, and known as the music-room—was lighted by electric light, and made beautiful with flowers. The band, established in a temporary gallery over the music-room door, had been one of the features of the past London season. The supper was ever after referred to by a celebrated London firm as one of its greatest triumphs. And over the whole affair there rested that indescribable glamour that money alone can never produce, that indescribable something which depends on the excitement and elation of the guests themselves, and which is known as "go." The whole county was there; everybodies and nobodies alike. They had all turned out, moved by one of those mysterious impulses which are quite inexplicable—of which it may be said that they are one-third curiosity, one-third tendency to go with the crowd, but of which the final third remains an unknown quantity—to do honour to a man whom many of them hardly knew, and whose father they had at once respected and looked down upon. They had come, expecting to be pleased and excited; keenly alive to the interest attaching to the occasion from the fact that the host and the pretty girl who wore such wonderful diamonds were to be married in three days' time; and the zest of the situation had only increased as the night wore on.

"The kindest soul on earth—and that



beaming face of hers does one good to see."

The speaker was a fine-looking, white-haired old man, a great county magnate; and he was standing against the wide arched opening which led from the drawing-room to the music-room—a highly advantageous position from the point of view of the looker-on. It was half-past twelve or more, supper was in full swing, and he was looking across the moving, laughing, chattering groups in the drawing-room to where, through the open door, a stream of people were to be seen coming and going in the direction of the dining-room, hovered over and marshalled, as it were, by Mrs. Cormack—hot, painted, marvellously over-dressed, and with it all the personification of radiant delight and excitement. The man addressed, rather a supercilious-looking young man, shrugged his shoulders slightly as he, too, looked in her direction, and then the band began again with the last "extra," and new currents began to form from all points and to make slowly towards the music-room.

"I must be off," he said. "I'm dancing this with Miss Astell. Fine woman she is!"

The elder man looked him up and down as though such free-and-easy modern manners were by no means to his taste, but any reply he might have proposed to make was frustrated. People were streaming through the archway, and nearly every one had a word for him, and demanded a word in return. The stream had ceased, the band had struck up in good earnest, and he was just settling himself to watch the dancers when he pulled himself up again with a cheery chuckle to greet a couple who came quickly across the drawing-room—Basil Cormack and Brenda.

Brenda's girlish prettiness was very nearly loveliness to-night. She was beautifully dressed in white, and her frock became her to perfection; but it was an indescribable something in her face itself that gave her that added charm. There was a soft pink flush on her cheeks, and her eyes were very bright with excitement and shyness; but it was not that alone. There was a rather odd and fleeting wistfulness about her expression, but it was not that either—not wholly that, at least. It was that indefinable something which comes only to a girl who wakes up suddenly to a realization that her marriage-day, with all the new life that lies beyond, is waiting for her very near at hand.

Apparently not even Basil Cormack's imperturbability had been proof against the success of his entertainment, for though his handsome features were as impassive as ever, there were strange lights in his wide gray eyes.

"Ah, Sir Richard," he said, stopping to return the elder man's greeting. "Have you had some supper?"

"Yes, yes!" was the cheery answer. "Glad to see you're taking a little reward, Cormack, after all the hard work you've done."

He finished with a laugh and a look at Brenda. She blushed and answered with that pretty, half-shy manner that had already made her very popular:

"So many people are at supper, you see, that Bas—Mr. Cormack thought we might have just a turn."

"Then go away and have it," said the old gentleman genially, "or you will be too late! By Jove!" he added in soliloquy, as they slipped into the stream of dancers with a little gesture of farewell, "what a good-looking couple they are, too! And there goes the handsomest woman in the county! Poor old Astell! How proud he was of her!"

Sir Richard kept his position, watching the dancers and beating time somewhat out of time, until the dance was over; and then he stepped forward to a couple who had come to a standstill a pace or two from him.

"Bravo!" he said. "A capital finish, Miss Magdalen!"

It was Miss Astell to whom he spoke, and it was Miss Astell to whom he had referred as the handsomest woman in the county, and that he had done so was not strange. She was looking magnificently beautiful. Simply as she dressed in the daytime, her evening dresses were always rich, and to-night her dress, perfect in taste, in cut, perfect above all as a setting for its wearer, stood out from every other in the room. The colourlessness, which was usually the one fault of her appearance, had given place to-night to a slight flush of colour, and her large dark eyes shone with an unusual light. Her whole face was curiously alive and vivid.

She laughed lightly, unfurling her fan as she answered, and glancing from Sir Richard to her partner.

"It was a good dance!" she said, and there was an excited ring in her voice. "We danced it nearly through!"

"Why isn't your brother here?" asked

Sir Richard. "It's quite in his line, this sort of thing."

"He couldn't get down for it, unfortunately," returned Miss Astell carelessly. "Yes, it does seem a pity."

"Is that Mr. Gerard?" enquired a good-natured and somewhat breathless voice. Mrs. Cormack had just bustled up, fanning herself vigorously. "A dreadful pity I call it!" she continued, quite a cloud spreading over her radiant countenance. "I made so sure he'd manage to come somehow. It doesn't seem the right thing without him! I keep thinking of him and quite missing him. Mind you tell him, Magdalen, the first time you write. I came to fetch you, my dear, to speak to Lady Marchant. She says it's years since she saw you. She was asking for Mr. Gerard, too!"

The subject of Gerard Astell's refusal of his invitation to the dance was one on which Mrs. Cormack had expended a great deal of very genuine lamentation during the past fortnight. He was a great favourite of hers, and she had gone so far as to send him, by his sister, pressing appeals to reconsider his decision. But Gerard had only returned messages of regret, somewhat hastily worded, and repeated that he could not leave town. Mrs. Cormack again expressed her distress on the subject, now, at further length, and then she and Miss Astell moved away. As they passed out of ear-shot Miss Astell's late partner laughed unpleasantly.

"Astell has enough on his hands just now without dances!" he said. "They say he's on his last legs—racing, you know, sir—and cards!"

A passage across the room with Mrs. Cormack was by no means an easy or a rapid affair, as that good lady's attention was distracted at every turn from the object she had in view. She and Miss Astell were about half-way through the crowded room, when she caught sight of her son and Brenda coming towards them on their way to the door, and became radiantly oblivious of everything else.

"There they are!" she said beamingly to Miss Astell. "Well, my dear," she continued to Brenda, as the couple reached them, "have you been dancing with Basil? I'm sure you've both of you been as good as gold all the evening, and you deserved a dance, didn't they, Magdalen? By-the-bye," with a cheery laugh, "I suppose, Basil, you consider Magdalen such an old friend that she won't exact your duty from

you. I don't believe you've danced with her."

Miss Astell was standing just as Mrs. Cormack's halt had arrested her, cool, careless, and beautiful, looking straight at Basil Cormack. The colour on her face was a little deeper, the life a little quicker, as she turned away.

"Mr. Cormack has in no way failed in politeness!" she said, and the light mockery of her tones sounded as though some growing excitement were getting beyond her control. "Let us get on, Mrs. Cormack. These two are on their way to supper, I expect."

She turned away, and Mrs. Cormack followed her, perforce. She had not spoken to Basil Cormack. She had not spoken to him, though she had avoided it so subtly and naturally that none but their two selves knew of the fact, throughout the six weeks that had passed since their interview in the garden.

"Basil," said Brenda, looking up at him as they passed out into the hall, "I don't think I want any supper, do you know? Couldn't we go and get cool somewhere?" Her cheeks were flushed, and the wistfulness of her eyes was more apparent than it had been. The dance with Basil had evidently stirred her in some way.

Basil paused and looked at her for a moment. There was a fitful light in his eyes.

"Yes, of course!" he said. "Let us go out on to the terrace and have a little air."

They crossed the hall together in silence and went into the library. The room was almost empty, and only one or two smiles followed them as they strolled through the open window on to the terrace outside. The terrace was a short one, closed by an angle of the house; the larger and more popular one ran by the drawing-room windows, and this one was deserted. The library window which gave access to it was at the end, so that a few steps took them out of sight or hearing into the quiet and peace of a lovely summer's night.

The landscape before them was very still. There was no moon, and neither saw the figure of a man half hidden by the hedge which divided the garden from the park a little to their right.

"How delicious!" said Brenda softly. She stood for an instant, her hands loosely clasped before her, her face lifted to the sky, and dawning on it, touching its

childish simplicity strangely, a vague, hardly-formed solemnity and questioning. Then quite suddenly, Basil took a step towards her and clasped her passionately in his arms, kissing her again and again. On the instant the figure of the man against the hedge disappeared into the darkness.

A half-choked cry broke from her, and for a moment she struggled faintly to free herself. She was so startled, and that cry and struggle expressed her first instinct. Up to that moment Basil's love-making had been calm, almost phlegmatic, and she had accepted and returned it with girlish composure. Then she seemed to bethink herself, and resisted no more until he released her as suddenly as he had taken her into his arms.

"I—I—beg your pardon, Brenda!" he said slowly. He was pale, and his eyes gleamed strangely.

Brenda, too, was very white; there was a quiver about her mouth, and her eyes were large and frightened. But she did not move away from him, and her voice, though it was very low, was quite steady.

"There—there isn't any need," she said. She paused, and that solemn questioning seemed to develop further upon her pale, childish face. She shivered slightly and then, as though with something of an effort, she stretched out one little white-gloved hand and laid it timidly and half-shrinkingly on Basil's.

"Basil," she said, very low, "I want to say something. I've been thinking—I've been thinking, that I haven't thought enough how serious it all is. I wanted to say that when I asked you to come out—I—I'm rather afraid, Basil."

"Afraid of what?"

He had put his arm round her and drawn her close, and she made no resistance, only she turned a little paler and her eyes dilated as she felt his pressure and met the eyes he fastened on her face.

"It has been coming to me all the evening," she said, looking up at him with an evident effort of will that brought a shadowy womanliness to her face. "Do you think, do you really think that I shall make you a good wife, Basil?"

"Is that all?" Basil Cormack laughed aloud, a thing he was rarely known to do, and bending down he pressed his lips on hers for the first time. He did not notice how cold they were, or how they quivered

as he stooped towards them. "What has put such questionings into your head, Brenda?"

"I don't know!" she said vaguely, and there was a tone of smothered distress in her voice. "The—the people, I think, or—the nearness; I—don't know!"

There was a long silence. Basil Cormack, still with one arm round her, was staring out into the night—across the spot where the man had stood—with the old expressionless look creeping back into his eyes. Brenda was looking at the stars. At last Basil seemed to rouse himself.

"Come," he said, in his ordinary deliberate tones, "we must go back, I'm afraid."

She started and looked at him, wistfully and almost furtively.

"Yes!" she said, and her voice shook a little. Then she moved mechanically and preceded him across the balcony and over the threshold. The music of the band burst upon them, and as they emerged from the library—quite empty now—they were met in the hall by an eager young man on whose susceptible heart Brenda had made a profound impression.

"My dance, Miss Stansfield!" he cried. "It's begun, and I've been hunting every-where for you. Won't you come?"

A hotter flush than it had worn all the evening rushed over Brenda's face as they mingled once more with the throng of people. It was as though the effort it cost her to bring herself back to the present had sent an added thrill of excitement through her.

"Of course!" she cried gaily, slipping her hand into the arm the young man offered her. Then, just as they were moving away, she stopped suddenly and turned to Basil. "I've dropped my fan!" she exclaimed. "It must be on the balcony, Basil. Would you mind getting it for me?"

Brenda's words were half-accompanied, half-interrupted by the pretty chimes of a beautiful old clock in the hall. It was striking a quarter to two. Basil Cormack smiled assent, and, turning, went back into the empty library.

"You won't wait, Miss Stansfield!" pleaded her cavalier. "Don't do me out of my dance. Cormack will bring it to you all right." And Brenda allowed herself to be led away.

"That's the jolliest dance I've ever had!" declared her partner some ten minutes later, as he stopped, breathless, with the

last notes of the waltz. "By Jove it was, Miss Stansfield."

Brenda laughed excitedly.

"I enjoyed it, too!" she said. "But, oh, I'm hot! I want my fan. Do you see Mr. Cormack anywhere?"

The young man looked for Mr. Cormack, but without enthusiasm.

"No," he said, "I don't. But come and have some supper, Miss Stansfield. That'll cool you! You will? Good!"

He conducted her into the supper-room in triumph, established her at a little table, and catered for her valiantly. The supper was rather a long process, though Brenda ate almost nothing; for just as they were leaving the table, two old ladies and an old gentleman, all of whom were most anxious to improve their acquaintance with the future Mrs. Basil Cormack, came to the vacant places and insisted on detaining Brenda for "a little chat."

"Oh, dear," she sighed to her faithful escort, as they crossed the hall, "it wasn't cool at all! I really must have my fan, and you really must go and find Mr. Cormack!"

Preceding them by a pace or two, alone, as it seemed, for the moment, was Miss Astell, and as Brenda spoke she turned suddenly. Her expression had altered singularly during the last hour. The colour had faded even from her lips, and the light and life had died out of her face, leaving it set and hard. Only her eyes were bright and glowing.

"Your fan?" she said. "Take mine, Miss Stansfield, until yours turns up. Yes, do! I am not in the least hot." She put her fan into Brenda's hand, and passed on into the drawing-room.

"I'll hunt up Cormack in a minute," said Brenda's cavalier, "but perhaps——"

"Oh, no!" said Brenda hurriedly. "It's very good of Miss Astell. Now you must go and look for your partner, and here is mine," she added, with a smile, as a man appeared at her side.

Brenda danced that dance, and the next, and then Mrs. Cormack came up to her.

"My dear," she said, "people are going, I'm sorry to say, and I'm afraid you'd better not dance any more. They want to say good-night to you. You just come and stand by me, will you, my dear?"

So Mrs. Cormack took up her station in the middle of the room with Brenda by her side, and the stream of departing guests began to grow larger.

"You'll find Basil at the hall door, I

expect," said Mrs. Cormack with a beaming smile to those who enquired as to her son's whereabouts. And the stream was at its height when a rumour came back to her that the host was not in attendance at the hall door.

"He must be seeing after somebody at supper," she said. "Just tell some one to tell him, my dear. Or, no, I'll send."

She sent accordingly, and continued to assure his guests that Mr. Cormack was waiting at the door.

The stream had dwindled almost to nothing when Sir Richard Ashton, who had said good-night to Mrs. Cormack, and paid his kindly, old-fashioned compliment to Brenda, returned to the drawing-room with a genial laugh.

"Here, where is this fellow, Mrs. Cormack?" he said. "I'm not going without bidding him good-night, whatever other people choose to do. Fetch him out."

Mrs. Cormack gazed at him for a moment in blank astonishment.

"Basil, Sir Richard?" she said. "Isn't he at the front door?"

"That's just where he is not," was the answer. "He must have given it up and retired to have some supper."

"He's not in the supper-room."

The words came from the doorway, spoken by another man who had already said good-night to Mrs. Cormack. And simple as they were, matter-of-fact as was the tone in which they were uttered, they seemed to fall with a curious chill on the little group in the drawing-room. Brenda turned pale. In the instant's silence that followed, four or five people, already muffled up for the long drive home that lay before nearly all the guests, reappeared about the drawing-room door, as though moved by one of those extraordinary instincts for something wrong which are so wholly inexplicable. Foremost among them was Miss Astell, wrapped in a long cloak with some fur about it; and she came straight on, the man on the threshold making way for her mechanically, and stood in the doorway. There was a strangely expectant look in her eyes.

"What an extraordinary thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Cormack, emerging from the inexplicable shadow which had suddenly fallen, yet speaking with more flurry and anxiety than the actual situation seemed to warrant. "Tell some of the servants to look for him, will you, please? He must be on the terrace—the library terrace, perhaps, or—or somewhere."

Almost before she had finished speaking Sir Richard Ashton had stepped out on to the terrace with a loud "Cormack, my good fellow, where the dickens are you?" and several of the men gathered about the door had disappeared in various directions. In the little stir, part curiosity, part a vague apprehension, that swept over the groups that remained, it seemed hardly a moment before they returned simultaneously. It seemed to bring that vague apprehension nearer, it witnessed eloquently to the feeling of cold dismay that was gradually filling the place recently so full of gaiety, that none of these emissaries spoke. It was Sir Richard Ashton who said, as he stepped back into the drawing-room and met their blank, uneasy faces:

"It's very odd!"

The wave of apprehension broke over Mrs. Cormack as he spoke, and her self-command was instantly submerged.

"But where can he be?" she cried, turning wildly from one to the other. "Where can he be? The host and everything! What can he be thinking of! Tell them to look in the garden, to look everywhere. He must come! He really must! Sir Richard—Brenda, my love—where can he be?"

Ten minutes more and the beautiful, newly-furnished house and all the wide gardens were echoing with that question, bearing with it an ever ghastlier ring of mystery and dread. In the drawing-room, huddled together, were a dozen frightened women, trying in vain to soothe or moderate the agony of agitation into which Mrs. Cormack had fallen, and against which Brenda's gentle words, as she knelt at her side, pale and trembling, were powerless. On the outskirts of the group, still and white as a statue, stood Miss Astell, one hand grasping the back of a chair, her head half turned, her face slightly uplifted, as though her whole force were concentrated in the intensity with which she listened. All over the garden, all over the house, lights flashed, and men hurried hither and thither, and shouts were carried to and fro on the night air.

But it was all in vain. The shouts re-echoed in vacancy, or answered one another only, in ghastly mockery of those strained and agonised ears. The lights, that lit up everywhere traces of Basil Cormack's taste and will, revealed no sign of his material presence. Hours passed, and the group in the drawing-room

remained practically unaltered but for the horrible permanence which seemed to grow about the terror and dread to which it witnessed. Hours passed, and the emissaries who went to and fro between that frozen and helpless group and the searchers, were slower in their passage, fewer in number, and more reluctant.

At last, after a long, long interval of sickening silence, Sir Richard Ashton came slowly into the drawing-room in the grey morning light—alone.

Out of his own house, from the midst of a crowd of his own guests, without a word, a sign, or a warning, Basil Cormack had vanished utterly, leaving no trace behind.

#### CHAPTER V. HOW IT HAPPENED.

"If you please, miss, Mr. Gerard has come."

The words were twice repeated, and in each case accompanied by a brisk tap at the door, before Miss Astell's cool tones, with a mechanical ring about them, answered:

"Very well!" and the servant went downstairs.

On the other side of that closed door, in her own room, was Miss Astell, alone. She was sitting near the window, rather as though she had let herself drop into her chair when tired out with walking or standing, than with any appearance of set purpose in the shape of occupation or rest. She was gazing out across the country, her eyes were bright and intent, and there was a peculiar light about her expression—a light which seemed like a shadowy reflection of some fire that burnt within. Now and again the slightest suggestion of a smile touched her pale lips into a strange triumph.

The day, which was drawing to a close, was the second since the dance at Arsdale, and through those two days that peculiar light had never ceased to play upon Miss Astell's face. It had changed her greatly. It was as though in the hot glow from which it emanated all the composure of her expression had melted, leaving revealed strange possibilities of wild emotion. Her face was haggard, and her eyes were shadowed as though with sleeplessness.

She had answered the maid mechanically, and she sat on, motionless, for a minute or two, as though even while she answered the words had hardly penetrated her working brain. Then gradually a sense of

the facts seemed to come to her. She moved restlessly and rose, a faint shadow of her ordinary calm settling itself in rigid lines over her face as she did so—a thin veil over that unquenched light. She crossed the room, and looked steadily at her reflection in the glass for a moment; then she opened the door and went downstairs.

"Where are you, Gerard?" she called quietly.

"Here—in the dining-room," was the answer; and as he spoke Gerard Astell came quickly out into the hall.

He was much altered since his last visit to his sister, nearly three months before. He looked thin and worn, and there were careworn lines about his mouth and eyes, traced side by side with other lines which told of reckless dissipation. But these were the imprints of time, and evidently fundamental characteristics of his face when in repose. Superimposed upon them, the expression, as it seemed, of the hour or the moment, was a shocked, almost panic-stricken expression. He was very pale, and was evidently trying to control considerable agitation.

He met his sister with a kiss—a most unusual greeting; and it was significant of the preoccupation of mind in the man and the woman alike that she bent her head to receive his salute as mechanically as it was given.

"You got my telegram?" he said as he followed Miss Astell into the drawing-room. "I only heard last night—saw it in the paper—and I thought I must run down and—and hear the facts. Good heavens, Magdalen, what a—what an extraordinary affair!"

"I wrote to you!" returned Miss Astell, ignoring his last words. "I thought you would perhaps come down. Haven't you had my letter?"

There was a hardly perceptible pause, and then Gerard shook his head.

"No!" he said. "I was staying with a fellow, and I didn't go home. But tell me the details, Magdalen. I've only seen the baldest newspaper paragraph to the effect that Basil Cormack had disappeared! What is the idea? What is supposed? How did it happen? Is it thought that he is—dead? Murdered?"

Miss Astell was standing at the other side of the room, her back towards her brother, and she did not turn as she answered.

"That has been suggested," she said slowly, and there was an odd ring about

her voice—possibly because her back was turned. "But—I believe the detectives have reason to believe that it is not the case."

A quick breath of relief parted Gerard Astell's lips; he sprang up from the chair into which he had thrown himself and began to pace restlessly up and down the room. He was evidently strongly excited.

"What do they believe, then?" he cried. "What's their theory? Confound it all, Magdalen, I know you hated him; but as his mother's friend—poor, dear old soul—and all the rest of it, I suppose you take some interest in the affair? You can tell me what is known, at any rate?"

There was so long a pause that Gerard was apparently on the verge of still more vehement adjuration, when Miss Astell turned and seated herself quietly.

"Yes," she said calmly, "I can tell you what is known, it is not much. Did your paper say that it happened during the course of the dance at Arsdale?"

"Yes!" said Gerard hastily. "Yes! yes! of course!" he turned away suddenly and resumed his walk. "When was it? How did it happen? When was it found out? Who saw him last?"

"It was found out at the end of the evening," answered Miss Astell. Her face was so still that the light was hardly perceptible upon it now. "He"—neither brother nor sister had referred to the missing man by name—"he was not forthcoming when people went away. Mrs. Cormack was receiving good-nights in the drawing-room, and she supposed that he was seeing everybody at the door. When people found he was not there they supposed they had missed him, somehow, and went away without troubling. You will imagine that they have been over by the score to explain exactly how it happened and what they thought, and to make the wildest and most incoherent statements as to how and when they each individually saw him last. Eventually Sir Richard Ashton insisted on saying good-night to him, and he was nowhere to be found!"

Gerard had come to a standstill before his sister, unconsciously, as it seemed, in the intentness of his interest, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, his pale shocked face working with excitement.

"And what does all their talk amount to?" he said. "Who is supposed to have seen him last?"

Miss Astell's face was stiller than ever, and her voice as she answered was so quiet as to be absolutely hard. She was looking down at her hands as they lay in her lap. "It appears," she said, "that he and Miss Stansfield were together on the library balcony, and when they went in again she discovered that she had dropped her fan. She asked him to fetch it, and saw him go back into the library. A partner was waiting for her, and she went on into the dancing-room without waiting."

"But"—the word broke from Gerald Astell eagerly, and then quite suddenly he stopped short, catching his lip savagely between his teeth. He had flushed a dull dark red, and he turned away abruptly to the window.

"This was at a quarter before two o'clock!" continued Miss Astell. "Miss Stansfield says that she noticed the clock chime the three-quarters as she went back into the room."

A sudden stillness had come over Gerard Astell's figure, and there was a moment's pause. "A quarter to two!" he said in the tone of a man who is thinking the matter out. "Ah! Yes!"

"There is little more to tell you," said his sister. "As far as has transpired after that moment no one knows anything of his movements, no one saw him. He never brought Miss Stansfield her fan. She says she was just sending some one to look for him several times, but she was evidently enjoying herself very much and she managed without her fan—indeed, I lent her mine!"

"And has it been found—the fan, I mean!" Gerald had faced round again as his sister spoke.

"Yes!" said Miss Astell slowly; the light flickered faintly on her face as she spoke. "It was found in the balcony, broken to pieces."

"Good Heavens!"

There was a silence.

Gerard Astell stared blankly before him; his sister sat calmly regarding her hands as they lay in her lap. Each seemed occupied with his or her own thoughts. Gerard spoke first.

"And this is absolutely all?" he said hoarsely.

"This is all," assented Miss Astell, rising.

"And is there no theory? You say they don't think it was murder—what do they think?"

"They are very reticent!" said Miss

Astell, with a peculiar little smile. "If you mean the detectives, I believe they think it a case of simple disappearance."

"But why in the name of wonder should he disappear? Do they suppose he was kidnapped?"

Gerard Astell laughed harshly, and his sister shrugged her shoulders.

"I really do not know what they suppose," she said. "Poor Mrs. Cormack is in a pitiable state between distress and excitement; I have been with her a great deal, and I have heard all they have to say. But that is, as I said, very little."

Gerard took a meditative turn up and down the room. His excitement seemed to be subsiding now that he knew all there was to know, and his ordinary manner was returning to him though he remained grave and nervous-looking.

"How is Miss Stansfield?" he said at last in a low voice. "How does she bear it?"

"Very quietly," returned Miss Astell. "Fortunately, she is not a demonstrative person."

There was another pause, and then Miss Astell prepared to leave the room.

"Well," she said, "your room is quite ready, Gerard. Mrs. Cormack is anxious to see you. I have ordered dinner early, and we will go up afterwards." She was crossing the room as she spoke, and she stopped suddenly. "Why, Gerard!" she said, with her little mocking smile, "you don't mean to say you've separated the inseparable? Where's Scamp?"

Gerard roused himself from the thoughts in which he was apparently lost, and laughed ruefully.

"He's lost, Magda!" he answered. "I'm most awfully cut up about the little beggar!"

"Lost!" echoed his sister. "Really? Why, I thought he never left you. When did it happen?"

Gerard stooped suddenly to brush some dust off his trousers.

"The other day," he said hurriedly. "How we managed it I don't know. He may have been stolen, poor beast! Any way, he's gone!"

#### CHAPTER VI. A CLUE.

MRS. CORMACK'S condition was only faintly described by the epithet "pitiable," which Miss Astell had applied to it. The shock she had undergone, the excitement, and the terrible suspense involved in

the mystery which had suddenly cast so appalling a shadow upon her comfortable, contented life, had reduced her to a state of hysterical fever which was hardly to be controlled.

She received Gerard Astell, when he appeared with his sister on the evening of his arrival at the Cottage, with floods of tears, casting herself upon him—literally as well as metaphorically—and recapitulating with ever-increasing incoherence all the circumstances, and all the theories suggested to her in the course of the past two days; and appealing to him wildly to make "them," whoever they might be, find her son.

"You and me was always friends, Mr. Gerard," she pleaded, catching with trembling fingers at his coat-sleeve, "and you and him, too. You'll help us now, won't you, Mr. Gerard?"

And Gerard, pale and agitated, moved, it seemed, almost beyond his power of self-control, responded with earnest protestations of his readiness to serve her by any and every means in his power. There had been since his schoolboy days a great kindness—careless enough on his part, perhaps—between him and Mrs. Cormack.

The services of a man on the spot who could act as general adviser and referee, and who might be considered as in some sort an authority by the confused and bewildered women, were urgently needed, though rather for the sense of support and stability involved than for anything definite that any man other than a detective could do. Mrs. Cormack had no male relations with whom she was on intimate terms. Such of her county neighbours as could, and, in such a thrilling and unusual crisis, gladly would have acted as her advisers lived too far from Whorlbeck to be of any practical use. So it happened, naturally enough, that Gerard Astell, capable, kindly, and impulsively desirous to be of use, drifted into the vacant place. He had spoken on that first evening of returning speedily to town, but the next day passed, and the next, and from day to day his journey was actively postponed. All the inevitable business connected with the situation—the transactions with Scotland Yard, with the men employed in the ghastly searches netituted far and near—was dropped into his hands by Mrs. Cormack, who clung to him as her only hope and stay, and who ever so nearly approached a state of almness and reason as under the influence

of the gentle consideration and cheery good sense in which he never failed.

Three days had passed since his arrival; five days since Basil Cormack's disappearance. It was about four o'clock on a grey September afternoon when Gerard Astell, coming up the drive to Whorlbeck Hall, hesitated, and then turned off and walked round the house until he came to a garden door. He opened it and went in, turning to a door close by which led into a morning-room much used at present by Mrs. Cormack.

"I thought I might come in unannounced," he began cheerily as he entered the room. Then he stopped short and the reassuring smile died suddenly out of his face. "I—I hope I didn't startle you, Miss Stansfield," he said gently, and with a hesitation which sat oddly on him.

The only occupant of the room was Brenda, and she was standing with her face turned towards him over her shoulder, having evidently started that instant to her feet. The past five days had taken from Brenda all her girlish colouring, much of her girlish roundness of contour; her face was changed as twenty years of life might not have changed it. The obvious difference between the Brenda of a week ago and the Brenda of to-day lay, of course, in her thinness and pallor, in the heavy shadows about her eyes, and in the simple anxiety and distress of her expression. But the real alteration lay deeper and was more subtly expressed. Her eyes were the eyes of a child no longer, but of a woman whose womanhood had come to her burdened with anguish, a gift which she can hardly understand, and of which she only realises the weight. They were haunted, suffering eyes, and as he met them Gerard turned his own hurriedly away. There was a crumple in the cover of the table near which she had been sitting, and she might have been resting her face upon her arm.

"No, oh no, thank you," she said. "I didn't know who it was."

There was nothing shy about her manner with him now. He and she had met constantly during the past three days. Constant consultation over the terrible subject of that household's every thought had been necessary between them; together they had borne the brunt of poor Mrs. Cormack's outbreaks of distress; together they had broken to her again and again the miserable "No news!" The confidence and sense of fellowship which a common



labour or a common pain alone engenders, was shadowed forth in her face as she met him with a little wan smile.

"You look done up," he said abruptly in a moment. "Have you been out to-day?"

The rather marked confidence which was characteristic of his ordinary manner did not return to it, and there was something tentative about him; even about that care for her which came so naturally of his position in the house.

Brenda shook her head.

"No," she answered.

"You ought to go," he urged gently.

"Won't you come for a turn in the garden, at any rate?"

She hesitated and glanced rather longingly out of window.

"I should like some air," she owned, "only——"

"Then come and have some air," he responded promptly. "This is your hat, isn't it?"

She yielded with another faint smile, and in a few moments more they were strolling quietly down a garden path. There was silence between them at first. Then as a little breeze fanned her cheek, a faint sigh as of physical relief parted Brenda's lips.

"It gets suffocating in the house," she said.

She lifted her pathetic eyes to his instinctively, and he met them steadily this time, though his brown, ugly face paled a little, and his smile as he answered her was stiff and mechanical. There was another pause after his words. Gerard Astell had apparently become absorbed in thought.

"Miss Stansfield," he began at last. He spoke almost harshly, as though he were plunging headlong into a subject which he could not otherwise bring himself to touch. "Miss Stansfield, have you ever thought what brutes we are—we men, I mean?"

Brenda had been gazing absently before her, a transitory peace stealing over her pale face as though she were being in some way soothed or rested. As though she had hardly heard, or but half understood his words, she turned her innocent eyes upon his with a startled, vaguely troubled expression. And as he met them Gerard Astell lifted his hand with a sudden, deprecating gesture, and turned his face away, as though he felt the look of keen shame and self-loathing that had swept across it.

"No," he said hurriedly. "You haven't, of course. How should you? I was a

fool. But—will you mind telling me if— if you have any theory in your own mind as to—what has happened?"

She looked at his averted face for a moment, the womanliness in her own face standing out in strong relief as she tried to fathom the connection of ideas in his words. Then failing in the attempt, she gave it up, and in the reaction subsided into her simplest and most dependent phase.

"I don't know," she said helplessly. "I mean—I can't think of anything."

The tone, so appealing to any manly impulse in its almost childish forlornness, seemed to touch him to the quick. He stopped and turned to her, his face full of an indescribable feeling.

"Have you ever thought," he said gently, "that Cormack may have had—troubles of which you did not know?" He had paused before the word "troubles," evidently substituting it for some other word in deference to the girlishness before him, and a strange spasm flashed across his face as he spoke. She did not answer for a moment; her eyes dilated slowly as she looked at him.

"Is there a clue?" she said.

"Yes," he answered slowly. "Willoughby"—Willoughby was the detective from Scotland Yard—"has wired to me. He thinks there may be reason to believe that Cormack sailed for Melbourne three days ago."

He had spoken in a low voice, and with the utmost reluctance, carefully avoiding looking at her face. He did not see it quiver all over for an instant as though he had struck her; nor did he see the look upon it as that quivering died away—the look of vague uncomprehended womanhood, realised only as pain, which seemed to spread from her eyes until it dominated for the moment all the youth in her face.

"What makes him think so?" she whispered.

Then, still without looking at her, he told her briefly and very gently the contents of a telegram which he had received from the detective an hour before.

"Don't look upon it as a certainty," he urged gently. "It seems to me the barest possibility. It is a clue only, and it may lead to nothing."

There was a moment's silence. Then Brenda let her face fall between her hands.

"Oh, why?" she said. "Oh, why?"

The question was not asked of Gerard Astell. It was an appeal wrung from the

girl in her unendurable pain against the hideous mystery in which she was caught and held, powerless to do anything but suffer. And though he felt and understood, Gerard made no attempt to answer. His breath came thick and fast—the only sound that touched the afternoon stillness—and his face was set and white. At last Brenda lifted her head.

"Thank you!" she said. "Thank you for telling me!"

Her lips trembled into a faint smile, and her eyes, as she turned them on him, thanked him also for the consideration which had forborne to touch her suffering with words. He made a quick gesture as deprecating thanks, and then she began mechanically to move along the path, and he walked by her side in silence. Neither had spoken when, as they reached a turn in the path, Brenda raised her eyes and said quietly:

"There is your sister, Mr. Astell."

Miss Astell was indeed visible, in the drive, on her way up to the house. She caught sight of Brenda, apparently, at the same instant, and as they exchanged gestures of greeting she hesitated, and finally turned out of the drive and came towards the couple in the garden. She was out of earshot, and Brenda said in a low voice to Gerard:

"Does Miss Astell know?"

He shook his head.

"Not yet," he said. "I will tell her."

In another moment Miss Astell had reached them, and with her presence something seemed to pass from the two she joined. With Brenda that something was the ease—the unconscious sense of sympathy that makes even pain less painful. Not even the pressure of the last five days had lessened her constraint with Miss Astell. With Gerard that something was a touch of gentleness and humility which had softened for the time all those hard lines of reckless dissipation which were always most visible when he was in his sister's presence.

"Is there any news?" said Miss Astell, looking at her brother. No two people met at Whorlbeck Hall in these days without asking that question, and Miss Astell never asked it without a flaming up of that light in her face.

An instant's pause followed the words, and Gerard glanced at Brenda. Slight as was the glance, hardly perceptible as was the pause, Miss Astell noted both.

"What is it?" she said instantly.

"This; from Willoughby," answered Gerard briefly, drawing a yellow paper from his pocket and handing it to her.

She took it quickly, and bent her head to read it. She must have read it many times over before she lifted her face again, white to the lips, round which a little smile played. Without a word she gave the paper to her brother, and without a word the three walked back to the house.

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### TOMMY ASKS QUESTIONS.

THE circumstances which had led the detective to identify with the missing Basil Cormack a certain Mr. Benjamin Case who had left London in a steamer bound for Melbourne three days before Mr. Willoughby found himself upon the track, were slight enough individually—were by no means overwhelming, indeed, considered as a whole. But in the total absence of any other clue of any sort or kind; as affording some slight glimmer of light in the impenetrable darkness in which the fate of Basil Cormack was wrapped; they acquired a disproportionate importance which rose and fell according to the attitude of mind in which they were surveyed. Where actualities are conspicuous by their absence, possibilities will inevitably assume an astonishing magnitude.

All such efforts to establish a separate identity for Mr. Benjamin Case as could be compressed into two days' time having only served to reveal him as surrounded by a mysterious isolation, it was hastily decided that the detective should follow in the next steamer, accompanied for purposes of identification by the missing man's valet. Advertisements were to be continued meantime in all the principal papers of Great Britain, calling upon any one who could prove Mr. Benjamin Case's individual existence to come forward and do so; but, setting aside the chance that such a person might appear and crumble the clue to nothing, it was obvious that nothing more definite could be known until Mr. Benjamin Case should be come up with. Six weeks must pass before the pursuers could reach Melbourne.

"And of course, sir," said Mr. Willoughby confidentially to Gerard Astell, "if it is the gentleman, and he means keeping out of the way for a bit—which is what it looks like to my mind at present—we may have to follow him half over Australia."

So the two men departed to the search; the valet loaded with messages and reproaches for the missing man by Mrs. Cormack, who attached herself to the clue held out to her as though it had been an absolute certainty; and the agonised excitement and breathless suspense of the first ten days subsided for the household at Whorlbeck Hall into the dreary monotony of a period of waiting, during which nothing was to be expected. Gerard Astell lingered on at the Cottage for another week; lingered on from day to day, although there was nothing more that he could do; and then went away suddenly. And with his departure the last touch of variety, the last shade of colour seemed to fade from the life of Whorlbeck Hall beneath the heavy pall-like quiet which had fallen on it.

Only on Arsdale itself, seven miles away, rested a heavier quiet still. The house stood out in the growing chill and greyiness of the autumn days, against its background of bleak moor, like a spellbound palace of fairy tale, holding its secret in grim silence. The servants had one and all given a hurried and unreasoning warning, and had left; and the house was cared for only by an old woman who lived at the lodge gates, and who made her perfunctory visits as brief as might be. It stood there empty in all its completeness, all the eager life that had stirred about it arrested, as it seemed, at a magic touch, waiting for its master. The very sound and movement of that last night seemed to strike against the stillness which had succeeded it, and touch it into something weird and terrible.

Before a fortnight had gone by, Mrs. Cormack, shattered in nerves and in body by the violence of her first emotions, could bear Whorlbeck no longer.

"My dear," she said to Brenda one evening, waking suddenly from an uneasy nap to fix her eyes on the girl's white, quiet face; "my dear, this life'll be the death of me and of you, too, you mark my words. You look like a ghost! I tell you what we'll do! We'll go to London, all of us. Perhaps it'll seem nearer there." Whether she meant nearer to Australia or nearer to an end of the weary period of waiting the poor lady did not explain. "Anyhow, it'll be more stirring, won't it! There's no one here but Magdalen Astell, and she's not much of a comfort somehow! Not like Gerard, don't you know?"

They went to London accordingly—Mrs. Cormack, Miss Brown, Brenda, and Tommy. The latter had found life rather a heavy affair lately, and was delighted at the change. And Gerard Astell more than justified the tone of affectionate regret in which Mrs. Cormack had spoken of him. On the very first evening of their arrival in town his name was announced shortly after dinner, and he appeared, cheery, daring, and with a touch of tender consideration running through all the fun which he levelled at the two elder ladies. He appeared to take it for granted that the close and intimate relations established in the country were to be maintained, and he came in and out of the house after that first evening at all hours. He seemed to understand the unconscious craving for distraction natural in a woman of Mrs. Cormack's temperament under the circumstances—a woman without resources within herself; and finding her wavering as to whether or no strict seclusion were incumbent on her during the period of suspense, he promptly and authoritatively negatived the idea. He was never tired of finding entertainment for her, or of acting as her escort and general factotum.

"We can only try to make it easier for her in her own way!" he said one day to Brenda. "Her way is an odd one, perhaps, but no other would suit her, you see."

The words were very gently spoken, and Brenda, who had been sitting by with a slight shade of wonder and disapproval on her face, as he insisted in rousing Mrs. Cormack to interest in the arrangements for a dinner to which he wished her to go, looked up at him quickly with a smile of self-reproach, not untouched with admiration.

"You think for us all!" she said softly.

For Brenda herself his thought, or rather the evidence of it, was as constant as it was delicate and unobtrusive. She had settled down to face the weariness of waiting with a quiet, uncomplaining patience which was so gentle and girlish that the womanliness behind it seemed to have sunk into abeyance again. Only she grew a little paler, a little thinner, a little more silent every day. Mrs. Cormack's way of seeking ease was not her way, and she must have suffered much from that lady's affectionate and well-meant efforts to "rouse her up a bit," as Mrs. Cormack phrased it, if it had not been for Gerard

Astell. If they were out together he was always at hand so to arrange matters that she should be left in the background; five times out of six he had some excellent reason to bring forward for leaving her at home, or for sending her on some quiet expedition with Tommy, in whose childish society she was always most at peace.

The first letter from Australia came at last, only to protract indefinitely the dreary waiting. Mr. Benjamin Case had left Melbourne immediately on landing, under circumstances that lent additional likelihood to his eventual identification as Basil Cormack; and the detective was setting forth on what would probably prove a long chase.

The news had little effect upon Mrs. Cormack. Her nerves had almost recovered from the original shock; she had quite decided in her own mind that Mr. Benjamin Case and her son were one and the same; and the waiting was consequently deprived of any severe strain for her. Her personal loss in her son was not overwhelming. She loved him warmly as her child; but she had always been a little afraid of him, always a little ill at ease in his presence—totally unconscious as she was of these facts. She still shed a good many tears with vehement lamentations over his absence, but she was not incapable of taking a certain delight in the interest attaching to herself from the story of the dance at Arsdale.

This attitude in Mrs. Cormack served to throw Brenda more and more upon the one person with whom she came in contact on whose sympathy she instinctively relied. She said little of the Australian news, though the days which followed brought an almost transparent look to her face and a heart-breaking weariness to her eyes. But the little she did say was spoken to Gerard Astell. It was he alone who understood the shrinking horror she experienced at Mrs. Cormack's tendency to revel in their notoriety, and her wish to bring her forward in her capacity of the missing man's betrothed wife. It was Gerard who was always at hand to obviate such a position for her, and to turn poor Mrs. Cormack's innocent, blundering pomposities aside with a jest.

It was shortly after Christmas—a Christmas given up by Mrs. Cormack to lamentation—that a certain shadow seemed to fall upon the ease and reliance of Brenda's manner with Gerard Astell; a shadow that came and went fluctuatingly. It was not

constraint; it was rather that she seemed impelled now and again to hold herself a little aloof from him; and there was always something troubled about her expression at such times. She got into the habit of casting a quick look at him whenever he came into the room, and sometimes the look would leave her eyes perplexed and pitiful. By degrees Gerard himself seemed to become conscious of the alteration in her manner, and keenly sensitive to her glance. He had deteriorated markedly in looks during those winter months; all the signs of dissipation perceptible in the autumn had slightly increased, though the careworn lines had disappeared. Throughout the winter, whenever he had appeared before lunch-time he had appeared haggard and pale, with heavy, sunken eyes; and hitherto he had seemed careless or unconscious of his looks and the suggestion they carried with them. Now, when he presented such a countenance in Mrs. Cormack's drawing-room, he would flush slightly as he met those girlish eyes, and a constraint would creep into his manner, to be dominated again by a reckless hilarity. Once, when he felt Brenda's cool little hand drawn quickly away from the touch of his hot fingers, he turned pale to the lips as he turned abruptly from her.

He seemed to avoid being left alone with her after this, and such a consummation was easily prevented through the instrumentality of Tommy, who was as devoted to Gerard as to Brenda, and would stick by his side with the tenacity of a little leech on the smallest encouragement. But it was through the agency of Tommy that an explanation came about at last.

One afternoon in January Gerard came into Mrs. Cormack's drawing-room with some theatre tickets, to find Brenda there alone, Mrs. Cormack being out shopping with Miss Brown. On the previous evening he had been conspicuously pale and wretched-looking; his manner had been almost irritably nervous, and Brenda's face had been full of a vague pain as she sat throughout the evening in a quiet which was almost total silence. They met now with that strange, troubled distance on her part, and a constraint on his which was almost awkwardness. It was a matter of course, under the circumstances, that he should wait for Mrs. Cormack, and he asked instantly for Tommy. Short as was the time that elapsed before the advent of Tommy, his appearance broke up an awkward pause.

"I'm so glad you've come," he began, as he pranced into the room. "I've got a lot of questions to ask you, Mr. Astell."

A sudden burning colour swept over Brenda's face as she sat in a low chair near the fire, and she stretched out her hand quickly to the child.

"Tommy," she said, "Mr. Astell would like to see your new soldiers, I expect. Where are they?"

Tommy put his curly head on one side and looked at her contemplatively.

"You forget things dreadfully, Brenda, don't you?" he said. "Have you ever had your head bashed in? Martin's brother"—Martin was the footman—"had his head bashed in, and he forgot things always after that. My soldiers got burnt up, don't you remember? It was a fire, and they were saving all the family only a coal flared up and the fireman fell in. I wonder what happens when real firemen fall in? I s'pose they make them fireproof first like the nursery milk-saucepan?"

He turned to Gerard as he spoke, as if feeling that only a male intellect could grapple with so knotty a point, and as his eyes fell on the young man a fresh thought seemed to strike him, and he made a bound from Brenda's restraining arm, and stood by Gerard's knee, intently staring into his face. Gerard was still very white; his eyes, for all their twinkle, were just a trifle bloodshot, and none of the muscles of his face were as steady as they should have been. He fidgeted uneasily beneath the clear, childish eyes.

"What's up, old fellow?" he said, with rather a hollow laugh.

"I wanted to see," returned Tommy. "They said you looked wild, Nurse and Martin did. And there are wild men in a book Aunt Louisa gave me, and——"

"Tommy, where did you go for a walk to-day?"

The words broke from Brenda in a tremulous tone, and her cheeks were scarlet as she leant forward and tried to catch and draw away the little relentless figure.

Gerard Astell let his hand fall on the boy's shoulder, and turning his face towards her with a dull flush on it, met her eyes for an instant only.

"Let him go on," he said, with a low, harsh laugh. "Go on, Tommy. What else did Nurse and Martin say?"

"Oh, lots," responded Tommy readily. "They said you was diss—diss—something, and you was a awful gambler. What's a gambler?"

"Oh, Tommy dear, hush!"

The words were a low cry of distress, and as they fell upon his ear, Gerard, who had thrown his arm round the child, suddenly pressed him sharply to him. It was the tense movement of sharp pain, but Tommy took it as an injunction to silence, and held his peace wonderingly.

"That'll do, Tommy," said Gerard, and there was a harsh, shamefaced ring in his voice. "I think Miss Stansfield has heard what Nurse and Martin say."

The tone was addressed to Brenda, though the words were spoken to Tommy. She had turned her head away to hide the great tears that had gathered in her eyes, and he could see that she was trembling very much.

"I wonder what else Miss Stansfield has heard?" he continued, recklessly, and almost as though something were goading him beyond his self-control. Again his words were addressed to Tommy, and the little fellow, with that strange instinctive comprehension of the fact that something is going on about them which they cannot understand, common with children, glanced up at him, and then silently fixed his bright eyes, very grave now, on Brenda. There was a moment's pause, and then the girl said in a tone so low and shaking as to be hardly audible:

"Mr. Astell, when you must know how sorry I am, I think it isn't kind——" her voice died away.

"It's kind of you to be sorry!" said Gerard recklessly; his hold on the child had tightened until it was almost painful. "When did it first occur to you that I was an object for compassion, may I ask? And what suggested the idea to you?"

She turned to him with a spirited movement, her face very girlish in its flushed, quivering reproach, her eyes wide and reproachful.

"You shouldn't sneer!" she said, in a low, quick voice. "Oh, you shouldn't! It's not like you! Not like what I thought you were. How can I be anything but sorry?"

He met her eyes for a moment, and then his own eyes dropped suddenly.

"I beg your pardon!" he muttered. "I'm a brute."

"No, you're not!" she cried impulsively, her cheeks flaming. "That's what is so dreadful! I've heard such—such things about you, and every one seems to take them for granted—even the people who are

fond of you. They seem to think that so long as you're nice and pleasant and useful to them, it doesn't matter how you spoil your life! They seem to think the—the things Tommy was talking about quite an accident—as if you couldn't help them and they didn't matter! Why, even Mrs. Cormack was quite surprised when she found I hadn't known all the time that you were—like that!"

She was gazing with great dilated eyes, horror-struck and pitying, full into his moody, downcast face, and there was a pause. Then, as though he felt her gaze, he lifted one hand and began restlessly to rumple Tommy's hair.

"Every one—every one knows it, you see!" he said heavily and confusedly. "I've been a scamp all my life!"

Tommy looked quickly up into his face as he said the word "scamp."

"Poor Scamp!" he said. "He's lost, isn't he? We shan't ever find him now, shall we, Mr. Astell?" Tommy paused with a tentative look on his small face. It was still oppressed by the consciousness that, as he said to himself, "Brenda and Mr. Astell were dreadfully sorry about something;" and his introduction of Scamp's name was a childish effort to divert the grave course of the conversation. He waited, to see if any answer came from Gerard. Finding that he remained silent, Tommy's childish intuition told him that the attempt had failed. Feeling not quite sure whether he himself were in any way involved in the general gravity of the situation—Tommy's experience taught him that when people were grave he had generally been naughty in some way—an impulse to escape seized his small soul.

"I think, please," he said, "I'll go upstairs to tea, now!"

Mechanically Gerard loosed his hold on the child, and hardly noticed by either he ran out of the room.

"I don't know how to say it to you," said Brenda, leaning slowly forward and clasping her hands tightly together on her knee. "I know men always think girls are silly, and can't judge, but surely—surely you could—alter!"

"Alter!" repeated Gerard slowly. He rose as he spoke, and stood with one arm resting on the mantelpiece looking down at her. "Yes, I suppose I could alter—if I tried." There was a peculiar, half-mocking inflection in his voice, but Brenda did not catch it. She clasped her hands a little tighter and lifted her face, quite

white with earnestness, until her eyes looked into his.

"Oh, try!" she said. "Try! I can't reason or argue—I should only make you laugh! But I am so unhappy, so dreadfully unhappy for you! Won't you try?"

He met her eyes for a moment more, and then he let his face fall forward on his arm with a stifled groan.

When he lifted his head (again he was alone).

#### CHAPTER VIII. THE CLUE FAILS.

"HULLO, Astell! Any one with you?"

It was the table d'hôte room of a restaurant close to Piccadilly Circus, and Gerard Astell was sitting alone at one of the small tables studying the wine card. Thus addressed, he glanced up and nodded with careless cordiality to the man who had paused opposite him, and now stood with his hand on the back of the chair facing him.

"No, old fellow!" he said. "I thought you might turn up!"

The words or the manner evidently containing for the other man a tacit invitation to seat himself at Gerard's table, he proceeded to do so, and fell to studying the bill of fare with the nonchalance of intimacy.

It was a first-class dinner that followed, but it was not a restaurant to which Gerard would have taken any lady of his acquaintance. And the man who shared his table was an accentuated specimen of the type of man with which the room was mainly filled—the other sex being but scantily represented. In physique he was ordinary enough—rather stout, rather bald, rather middle-aged. It was in expression and manner alone that he was noticeable, and it was his expression and manner that he shared with the rest of the room. His eyes were rather watery and far from steady; his mouth was coarse and calculating; there was not a line in his face that told of anything higher than animal self-indulgence and animal avarice and cunning. There was little enough in Gerard's face, as they dined and talked familiarly together, to separate him from the class to which his companion belonged. Something in his manner there was—something which for any one who knew them both must have brought a strange suggestion of his sister into that incongruous atmosphere—which separated him from the man himself. But that was

merely the accident of innate unconscious refinement as set against innate unconscious vulgarity. Morally he seemed not one whit the superior.

The talk throughout dinner was carried on in the incomplete sentences and half-sentences besprinkled with nicknames, which imply common interests, mutual friends, and constant intercourse. Both men drank a great deal of wine with a careless indifference to the quantity and an entire absence of results which was not without significance; and as they finished with liqueurs and cigars, the elder man remarked casually:

"You didn't turn up last night. First time you've missed this winter, they said."

Gerard waved his smoke away and laughed rather boisterously.

"Hang it all!" he said. "Very nearly."

"Coming round to-night, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

There was a moment's pause as the two men smoked in silence. But apparently Gerard's was not the silence of luxurious contentment, for he moved abruptly.

"What are you going to do now, old boy?" he asked. "What do you say to the Gaiety, or the Empire? One may as well get through the evening."

The elder man voted lazily for the Empire, and they strolled away together.

Two hours more had passed when they came out of the theatre into Leicester Square and walked away southward, still together and with the air of men for whom a necessary interlude is over, and the actual business of the evening about to begin. They walked briskly for about a quarter of an hour, and then they turned into a quiet street and went into a private club-house. They went straight upstairs to a back room on the first floor; a room fitted up with card-tables, at several of which pairs and quartettes of men were seated playing with quiet, matter-of-fact concentration.

It was four o'clock in the morning when Gerard Astell left that house, and he was not perfectly sober. He hailed a cab and was driven to his own rooms; he stumbled heavily up the staircase to the first floor; stumbled across his sitting-room to his bedroom; flung himself, still dressed, upon his bed, and fell at once into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke the sunshine was streaming into his room, turning the still flaring gaslight yellow, and falling with

painful brightness upon his heavy eyes. As he became slowly and confusedly conscious of his surroundings, he became conscious also of the sound that had waked him—a brisk and continuous knocking at the door.

"What the deuce is it!" he called stupidly.

"It's a note, sir. Waiting for an answer, sir."

With a muttered oath Gerard rose and stumbled across the room. He unlocked and opened the door and stretched out his hand.

"Waiting for an answer is just what it doesn't seem to see, Mary Jane," he said. "Give it here. What's the time?"

"Eleven o'clock, sir. Shall I bring you your hot water, sir?"

"And a cup of tea. Yes, Mary Jane."

He shut the door and crossing the room again with the note in his hand let himself fall into a chair, evidently too keenly sensible of physical discomfort to stand. He glanced at the window with a muttered "Confound the light!" and then began to open the note with shaking, uncertain fingers, which he lifted to his head as he began to read as though his senses were almost too heavy and confused to take in the meaning of the words before his eyes.

"DEAR MR. GERARD," the words ran, "I was quite hoping that you would have dropped in to dinner to-night, and it was quite a disappointment to us all when we had to sit down without you. So I'm writing to say that I hope you'll be sure and give us the pleasure of your company to-morrow. You haven't been near us for three days, and then you didn't stay to see me. We miss you so as never was.—Yours truly, "SARAH CORMACK."

For a moment or two Gerard sat staring stupidly at this epistle, so characteristic in its mixture of illiterateness, pomposity, and affection. Then his eye wandered from it to his shaking, feverish hand, and he turned sharply round to the table, his face almost sullen with an expression which should have been shame.

"I shan't go!" he muttered to himself, as he groped blunderingly for pen and paper. "No fellow lays himself out to be preached at!" He had a pen in his hand by this time, but his hand was trembling so much that the "Dear Mrs. Cormack" it traced was hardly legible. "Hang it all!" he said just above his breath, as he dashed

the pen from his hand, "I'll send a message—that must do!"

He strode across the room again, moving firmly this time as though the angry feeling with which his face was full were dominating for the moment the physical weakness he had brought upon himself, and shouted for Mary Jane. Mrs. Cormack's letter was still in his hand, and he glanced at it hesitatingly while he gave his order as a man in difficulties will do.

"Look here, Mary Jane," he said; "tell the messenger to say my love—my love—and—and—I shall be delighted!"

Having reached this conclusion, he banged the door violently upon the retreating figure of Mary Jane, and stumbled back to a chair.

"You fool!" he muttered between his clenched teeth, "you utter fool!"

It was on the very stroke of the dinner hour when Gerard presented himself in Mrs. Cormack's drawing-room that evening. He was overwhelmed by that good lady with a torrent of reproaches, and an exuberant explanation of the desolation his absence had caused in the house, all of which he parried with that daring fun which always stood him in good stead with Mrs. Cormack. He was even readier, more responsive, and more recklessly amusing than usual. Under the circumstances there was only time for the barest greeting between him and Brenda, and he did not catch the fleeting, pathetic glance she gave him, almost unconsciously. Nor did he notice, as it seemed, that during dinner she scarcely once spoke an unnecessary word.

If there was one thing in the world essential to Mrs. Cormack's happiness, and one thing which she would rather have died than confess to, it was her after-dinner nap. Circumstances this evening prevented her from taking it while she and Brenda were alone—Miss Brown was enjoying the unwonted dissipation of a missionary meeting in connection with the chapel which she faithfully attended; consequently when Gerard, after a very short interval, followed them to the drawing-room, strategic measures had to be resorted to.

"Brenda, my love," Mrs. Cormack began briskly, "you'll give us a little music, won't you? Or perhaps Gerard would give us a song—a nice quiet song? We should enjoy that, shouldn't we?"

There was a moment's silence. Brenda and Gerard glanced involuntarily each at the other. Their eyes met, and each, as

though conscious of detection, flushed guiltily, and assented hurriedly and simultaneously. The piano was at the other end of the long room—a double room divided by curtains—and they both understood what was expected of them quite as well as though Mrs. Cormack had said in so many words:

"Go and amuse yourselves quietly, young people, and don't disturb me for twenty minutes or so!"

Brenda turned quickly and went across the room, followed slowly by Gerard. There was something at once deprecating and nervous about his manner, as though he were well aware that he himself had brought the situation about by leaving the dining-room so quickly, and at the same time had done so almost in spite of himself.

"Will you sing?" she said, in a low voice, as they stood together by the piano. She had been looking white and tired as she sat silently through dinner, but now there was a little burning flush on her cheek, and her eyes were bright as if with painful embarrassment. She did not look at him as she spoke, but busied herself in turning over some music with trembling fingers.

"I would rather hear you play, if you don't mind!" he answered, and there was a slight constraint in his voice, too.

Brenda sat down instantly and began to play, and Gerard subsided into a chair. But the music which alone would please Mrs. Cormack under the circumstances was of the gentle, harmonious order, and such music Brenda never played from notes; consequently they faced one another still, though Brenda's head was bent over the keys, as the slow, dreamy melodies floated through the room. At last from Mrs. Cormack's far corner there came a gentle snore, and then Gerard spoke, making his voice subservient to Brenda's music. He did not move. He had been sitting for many moments with his arms folded, gazing past Brenda's pretty head at the wall beyond, and for the moment all that was reckless, all that was vicious seemed to be smoothed out of his face before a gravity which was almost sadness.

"Miss Stansfield," he said, "you're not angry with me for having managed this, are you?"

She raised her eyes to his with a sudden start, which was very girlish and helpless in its want of self-control.

"Oh, no!" she said hurriedly. "I—don't mind, of course!"



There was a pause, during which the music was rather uneven, and then Gerard began again. This time he moved nearer to her and leant forward a little.

"I am awfully sorry about—the other day!" he said.

"I'm afraid—I offended you! I ought to apologise."

There was a certain stiffness about the tone in which the words were uttered, low as it was, which was very youthful; and her face was quivering almost childishly. But Gerard hardly caught the tone; he was answering the words quickly and eagerly.

"Don't treat me like that!" he said. "If you think I've not been here since because I was offended, you're wrong altogether! I didn't come because—I couldn't! I didn't feel fit!"

She did not answer him in words, but she lifted her face and looked at him. Her expression was in suspension as it were, but her girlishness was touched and elevated by the pity and sorrow that lurked in her eyes. Her music died away into soft mechanical chords, and at the other end of the room Mrs. Cormack still slept peacefully.

"Didn't you really know until lately," continued Gerard, rather hoarsely, "that I was a bad lot?"

She shook her head without turning her eyes away, and her lips quivered.

"You're not—a bad lot!" she said, and there was something in her voice that made the assertion a most pathetic appeal.

"I don't know what else you can call a fellow who drinks a bit, and bets more than a bit, and plays a lot!"

The words were half-desperately, half-recklessly uttered, as though that appeal had cut him to the quick. To the indirect confession they contained Brenda made no answer. Only her head drooped a little, and a moment later a great tear fell on the key-board.

"Don't!" exclaimed Gerard, almost roughly, though his voice was still so low as not to disturb Mrs. Cormack. "Good Heavens, don't do that! I'm not worth it!"

Brenda lifted her hands quickly to her eyes, and then lifted her face again; it was very pale now, and the effort with which she kept it composed gave it strength and womanliness.

"I won't!" she said. "I know men don't like it. But if I could only tell you how unhappy I am!"

"I don't say I meant to be the kind of fellow I am now," he went on in a thick, hurried tone, half of confession, half of instinctive, unconscious self-excuse; "not when I was a youngster, you know! I really didn't! I never thought; I never thought about anything at all. I was just idle and I liked a lark, and I was a black sheep before I knew where I was. It didn't seem to matter, don't you know; as you said the other day, nobody minded. Nobody expected anything of me, either! Of course it was all my own fault, mind you. Over and over again I could have had a lift up if I'd cared a straw about it. But I didn't. And so—I've been going downhill all the time, don't you see?"

He paused, and Brenda said:

"I see!" Only the two words, but pity and sympathy could never have been more fully expressed.

"And what's a fellow to do?" said Gerard, with a low, unreal laugh, his voice breaking a little at the same time, as though that whisper had shaken him. "When a man's got into a groove, he's kept there by all kinds of things. There's not much chance of his getting away, even if he should happen to want to. Debts, for instance. Where's a man in my line to get money to pay his debts except at cards?"

A little flash had leapt into Brenda's eyes, and her whole face grew strong and resolute as she answered him instantly.

"Let him work," she said, in a low, ringing voice. "Let him work."

"Suppose he doesn't know how?"

"Let him learn, then," she answered, in the same tone. "Ah, you'll say I don't understand. When you come to the ins and outs, of course I don't! But I won't believe—and I don't think you believe—that if a man like you wants to work, and wants to break away from—from a bad groove, it isn't possible. Easy, of course, it wouldn't be, but it's possible. It's the will that matters! It's the will that's wanted. Oh, I can't believe, I won't believe, that you haven't got the will!"

"If I haven't, you make me ashamed to say so."

The words were hardly audible, but Brenda caught them, and she leant forward, speaking very sweetly and earnestly.

"But you have," she said. "I know you have, and you know it, too. And you're clever. You can't think in your heart that you're not—I don't mean conceitedly, but seriously, and looked at as a—a re-

sponsibility." She stopped short suddenly, and with her face bent down so that he could see nothing of it, played nervously with the ribands on her dress. Then she went on as suddenly as she had left off. "Oh, don't be angry," she said, in a low, hesitating voice, "don't be angry if I suggest something. You—you said something about debts, and I can see that when people are making a fresh start they would be such a heavy drag. You won't be angry? I've got a little money—three thousand pounds—and if you could——"

He stopped her suddenly, but very gently, and with a look on his face which it had never worn before.

"I couldn't," he said. "But that you should have offered it will make me a better man all my life."

Something in the ring of his voice, or the mere fact of being checked in her impulsive, earnest speech, brought back a slight touch of girlish self-consciousness to her, and she hesitated and faltered.

"I—I'm very sorry," she murmured. "I only thought that to start clear——"

"To start clear is everything," he assented, as she broke off.

"And is there any other way? I know a girl is so ignorant."

"There are ways," he said slowly, "if a man has courage."

She was looking full into his face; she was just going to put into words the pleading in her eyes which needed no further expression, when the door at the other end of the room opened and a servant came in bringing letters to Mrs. Cormack, who waked at the sound. She took the letters from the tray, and broke into an excited, agitated exclamation, which made Brenda and Gerard instinctively and hastily cross the room to her chair.

"It's an Australian letter!" she said. "Brenda! Gerard! it's an Australian letter, but it's not from Basil yet. Gerard, my dear, you open it; I'm fluttered!"

She handed the letter to Gerard, and he took it, his face growing strangely pale and compressed. He hesitated an instant and glanced at Brenda as she stood, also very pale, her eyes, wide and rather startled and frightened than expectant, fixed on the letter in his hand. Then he opened it.

He read the first sentence to himself, and a curious shock passed across his features. He glanced quickly through the rest, and then he lifted his head slowly.

"I—you must prepare yourself for a heavy disappointment, dear Mrs. Cormack,"

he said gently; and he gave one quick look at Brenda as he spoke. "The clue has come to nothing! Willoughby and George have come face to face with Mr. Benjamin Case, and it is not Basil."

#### CHAPTER IX. GERARD LOSES HIS TEMPER.

NEARLY a week had passed away, and over Mrs. Cormack's London house, as Gerard Astell passed upstairs to the drawing-room late one afternoon, there seemed to rest much the same hush and stillness as had rested upon Whorlbeck Hall during the week that immediately succeeded Basil Cormack's disappearance. Gerard himself looked pale and grave, and there was a look in his eyes as though he were face to face with a momentous question.

There was no one in the drawing-room, and he walked slowly up to the fireplace and stood there, warming himself and waiting, with the same absorbed expression on his face. In a minute or two the door opened and Brenda appeared. And as he saw her his face softened, and its gravity became sympathetic instead of personal and stern.

He moved quickly towards her.

"How is she?" he asked, as they shook hands.

"She is better this afternoon, really better. She has been quite quiet, and she slept all night."

"And how are you?" he said gently. He was still holding her hand, and she met his eyes with a wan little smile.

"I? Oh, I am quite well, thanks!"

Brenda was looking very white and worn, and there was that shocked look about her face which comes of sudden painful realisation. There was a certain peace and reliance in her eyes now as she answered Gerard's questions, but the look was there all the same.

The disappointment contained in the detective's letter had fallen very heavily upon Mrs. Cormack; more heavily than even those who best understood how completely she had persuaded herself that Mr. Benjamin Case and her son were one and the same were prepared for. She had passed from one violent hysterical attack into another; and when at last her physical strength would no longer allow of such vehement demonstration, floods of nervous tears, little less exhausting, had followed. But it was not the disappointment alone that so prostrated Mrs. Cormack; it was

the reaction involved in the sudden definite shock from the peace, the dulness of feeling, which the placidity of the past two or three months had—all unknowingly to herself—engendered; it was the realisation of this temporary oblivion, and the renewal involved of the first agony of her distress. And the realisation was shared by the whole household—was shared by Brenda.

She walked across the room now, and sat down in a low chair by the fire with a little unconscious sigh. Then she lifted her eyes to Gerard, as he stood on the other side of the fireplace.

"Have you been to Scotland Yard?" she said.

He nodded gravely.

"Yes," he answered gently.

"Have they anything to suggest—any other theory?"

"I'm afraid, for the moment, things are at a dead-lock!"

A tremulous sigh passed her lips, and she wrung her hands tightly together as her head drooped a little, and she sat with her face turned to the fire. Gerard watched her for a moment with a strange light in his deep-set eyes.

"I suppose we have all counted, more than we knew, upon the Australian clue," he said at last. He spoke abruptly, and there was a look of fierce pain on his face, which made it almost harsh.

Brenda did not look up.

"I did not know," she said hesitatingly, and the hesitation was in her own mind, not in her reliance on his sympathetic comprehension. "At first I did not count on it. But, I suppose, lately—gradually——"

Her voice died away, and Gerard said gently, though with a certain restrained vibration in his voice:

"It was inevitable that it should be so. But it makes it a terrible blow!"

She lifted her face to him suddenly, terrified and tremulous in every line.

"It's the darkness again," she said unevenly. "The horrible darkness and mystery. I didn't know—I didn't know that it had ever been lifted, but now it seems as though I couldn't bear it!"

Her voice rose as she finished to a little strangled cry; a cry in which all that she could never have expressed in words—could hardly have defined to herself—of the remorseful reaction from the comparative peace of the past month found voice. Meeting her piteous eyes he made an inarticulate sound of sympathy, and before

he could really speak she went on again as though words were a relief to her.

"To know absolutely nothing—nothing! That's what is so dreadful. To feel that we have all been looking in the wrong direction—that we have never had the very faintest real clue! Oh, it's horrible! It's horrible! It's like looking into an awful, thick darkness, that seems to choke you, and smother you, and you can't penetrate it—you can't—you can't, however much you try!"

The strain of attendance on Mrs. Cormack, with the constant self-control and self-forgetfulness Brenda had shown throughout all these days, had told heavily on her, and she had broken down now utterly; broken down with a total unreserve that witnessed to a certain relief and ease. She was not crying, but shivering, trembling convulsively, and her eyes were dilated and almost wild.

Gerard knelt suddenly on one knee by her side, and gathered her cold, shaking hands into his own, with a great compassion on his dark face.

"Don't try!" he said quickly. "Don't try, Brenda! Your eyes alone could not hope to penetrate the darkness! But there are any number of search-lights that have not been turned on yet, dear. It's nothing—any one at Scotland Yard would tell you that it is nothing—for one clue to fail! It only means unearthing another!"

"But suppose there is no other?"

Her fingers had closed instinctively round his strong hands, and she was looking into his face with eyes which, as he spoke, had grown less wild and agonised. She had not started as her name passed his lips—unconsciously to himself, evidently—nor did she seem conscious of the tenderness of his tone, except inasmuch as she was vaguely soothed and comforted by it. He answered the trembling terror in her words instantly and firmly.

"There is always another!" he said. "A dead-lock for the moment doesn't mean hopelessness, you know! It's only a sort of pause! We shall be on a new track, and a better one, too, in a day or so!"

"But it may end in the same way! And so much time has been lost!"

"Still, there is no reason for anything like despair. Where one knows nothing, one may just as well hope as fear! Any day, any hour, almost, may bring us news!"

A curious flash passed over his face,

whitening it as he spoke, but Brenda did not notice it. There had been nothing in his words themselves peculiarly convincing or reassuring, but either his tone or something else had given them a wonderful power over the girl's quivering nerves, and she was trembling no longer.

"That is true!" she said dreamily. "I will try to be patient."

"I know you will!" he said, a little thickly. He rose as he spoke, releasing her hands so gently that she was hardly conscious of the movement. "And don't think I don't feel how hard it is!"

She lifted her eyes to his and held out her hand with a gesture of absolute gratitude and reliance.

"You are so good!" she said simply.

The words were followed by a little pause. Gerard had flushed a dull red to the roots of his hair, and the colour had not faded when he moved and said: "I must go, I'm afraid. Magdalen was to arrive this afternoon, and she will expect me!"

Brenda looked up, with a slight start.

"Miss Astell?" she said. "I didn't know——"

"I know you didn't!" he said. "I didn't know myself till this morning. It is one of her erratic proceedings."

Miss Astell had spent the winter alone at Whorlbeck. She had had many invitations from friends in various parts of the country during the autumn, but she had refused them one and all, declaring with that careless frankness which was characteristic of her that she much preferred to stay at home. The preference seemed a curious one, and it was a good deal commented on by her friends. Whorlbeck in the winter was by no means a cheerful place. It was cold and damp, and its distance from any other village or great house isolated it almost entirely, when snow or heavy rain had done their work upon the country roads. But Miss Astell ignored comments and put aside all attempts at persuasion with calm decision. It was her fancy to remain at the Cottage, she said; and that being the case, her friends could only shrug their shoulders and talk about "Magdalen's eccentricities." It was apparently her fancy, moreover, to take every advantage of the difficulties thrown in the way of intercourse with her nearer neighbours by the winter weather; for she paid scarcely any calls, gave no invitations to the Cottage, and was, in fact, very little seen by any one.

Her correspondence with her brother

was always of a most intermittent nature; and it had lapsed altogether until Gerard revived it by writing his sister a line, in pursuance of an hysterical wish expressed by Mrs. Cormack that he should "be sure and tell Magdalen" of the failure of the Australian clue, and the consequent impenetrable mystery in which the fate of Basil Cormack was wrapped. She had given no hint, hitherto, of any intention of coming to London, and Gerard had been somewhat surprised on receiving a letter from her, this same morning, announcing that she would arrive late in the afternoon at the rooms in which she always stayed in town.

Three hours after Gerard left Brenda he was lazily leaning back in an arm-chair, smoking a cigar, and indolently contemplating his sister as she sat on the other side of the hearth, stretching out first one foot and then the other to the blaze. They had dined together, and Gerard's face had assumed the cynical insouciance which was its normal expression in Miss Astell's presence.

"Seem cold, Magda!" he said idly. "You don't look very fit, either. Been bored to death at Whorlbeck, I suppose?"

His words expressed a careless appreciation of the state of the case which was thoroughly characteristic of the relation between them. They were wholly inadequate, however, as a description of the effect of her lonely winter upon his sister. Miss Astell had altered indescribably during the past four months, and she looked now like a woman under the influence of some unremitting physical or mental suffering. She was very well dressed—rather more elaborately than had been her wont, but that elaboration could not hide the fact that she was painfully thin. Her beautiful features were not the less beautiful in that they were worn and sharpened; and her great dark eyes glittered with a feverish light. She had talked incessantly throughout dinner with a vivacity which was strange in her, and her brother's words had broken the first pause which had occurred; a pause during which her restless movement had never ceased as she passed first one foot and then the other to and fro on the edge of the fender.

She started violently, and leaned back in her chair, taking up the handkerchief that lay in her lap, and beginning to twist it aimlessly in her thin fingers.

"I suppose I have!" she said, and there

was something in her voice that suggested that the nervous restlessness which found expression in that incessant movement—so strange in so calm a woman—was by no means a surface affair. "I don't know that I shall stay long in town, though; it depends how I amuse myself. How is Mrs. Cormack, by-the-bye?"

Among all the topics discussed between the brother and sister during the hour and a half they had spent together, neither Mrs. Cormack nor anything connected with her had presented itself.

Gerard shifted his position as the question, carelessly enough spoken—callously, even, under the circumstances—fell on his ear. He crossed his legs, putting his cigar to his lips again as he stared into the fire, and answered rather shortly:

"Better!"

"Has anything more been heard?"

"Nothing. It's a dead-lock."

Miss Astell rose and began to move aimlessly about the room. To any one with eyes to see it, there was a desperate restlessness in those vague movements of hers as she passed to and fro behind her brother's chair. A sudden burning flush had swept over her face, and in the whiteness which it left behind, her eyes burnt like fire itself.

"What an extraordinary thing it is altogether!" she said, always with that slight vibration in her careless voice. "What do they say from Australia, exactly?"

"Simply what I told you—that they have come up with this Case, and he is not Cormack!"

"Ah! There is no possibility of mistake, I suppose?"

"What mistake could there possibly be? George could hardly fail to know his master when he saw him!"

The brevity and evident disinclination with which Gerard had approached the subject had given way only very slightly, and the last words were not spoken in a tone that invited further comment. Miss Astell did not respond immediately. She was standing on the other side of the room, behind him, tearing at her handkerchief with a strange absorption in her eyes.

"What are they going to do now?" she said abruptly.

"I'm hanged if I know," said Gerard gloomily. "Or if they know either, for that matter."

"There is something to be done, I suppose? They have some theory? What

is your own notion on the subject, Gerard?"

Miss Astell's voice was thin and breathless, and her face as she spoke was drawn and sharpened. Mechanically, as it seemed, she moved, and stood, still tearing at her handkerchief, where her burning eyes could rest upon her brother's face as he sat staring moodily into the fire. He made no answer, and she went on with a little harsh laugh:

"You must have some notion, I imagine! You believed in the Australian idea, I know! What do you believe now? It's too ridiculous to think of anything but voluntary disappearance, of course! Don't you think so? People don't get kidnapped now, of course! And as to anything worse, it's absurd to suppose that anything could really have happened of that kind! It would have been found out! He—Mr. Cormack—will turn up again sooner or——"

She was interrupted. With a laugh that was like a rough echo of her own, her brother threw himself back in his chair, flinging his unfinished cigar into the red glow of the fire.

"That's the question!" he cried harshly. "That's just the question, isn't it, Magda? For Heaven's sake let's change the subject. I'm sick of it!"

There was a dead silence. Gerard Astell remained just as he had flung himself back, staring blankly before him. His sister did not move, either. But there fell upon her where she stood an absolute stillness; a stillness which, in the sharp contrast it presented to her restlessness of a moment before, was almost awful. She stood there gazing straight down upon her brother's face, and her own face grew white and set as though her heart had almost ceased to beat. The glow had died suddenly out of her eyes. They were narrowed, and glittering like steel, and in the terrible concentration to which they witnessed, something seemed to be struggling to life.

Moments passed; five, ten; outside in the street a German band was playing waltzes, and the light, rhythmic sounds as they floated, rising and falling, into the room seemed to throw into even weird relief the silence on which they struck. At last it was Gerard who moved. He rose slowly and began to speak, at once sullenly and deprecatingly, as though he were vaguely conscious of having shown some sort of lack of courtesy.

"Perhaps I'd better be off now, Magda!" he began. "It—it must be getting late. I'm awfully sorry if I was rude to you. I didn't exactly mean to—shut you up! But I've had a good deal of the affair this week, do you see?"

"I see!" returned Miss Astell. She seemed to speak mechanically, rather than on any impulse of her own. "Good night, Gerard!"

#### CHAPTER X. FOUL PLAY.

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Cormack had found Miss Astell at Whorlbeck "not much of a comfort," all memory of that fact seemed to have passed out of her troubled mind, and she hailed "dear Magdalen's" arrival in town with rapture. She recovered sufficiently to come down to the drawing-room to receive "dear Magdalen's" first visit, stimulated by the excitement of having some one who had yet to hear her own account of the blow she had received. Under the stress of her reactionary agitation and despair she declined all entertainment, and poured a lofty scorn upon all those attempts to divert her mind which had previously been so successful. Consequently the appearance upon the scene of an old friend who was yet a new arrival at the present juncture; with whom the whole subject, in all its bearings, could be gone over again and again; was no small boon to her.

And whatever might have been lacking in Miss Astell as a neighbour at Whorlbeck in the autumn, it would have been impossible to reproach her with inattention in London. The letter which had announced to Gerard her intention of coming to town had spoken vaguely of "a few days' stay"; and her words to her brother as to the probable length of her visit had seemed to suggest that she might soon tire of it, and that she would be guided in the matter—as was usual with her—solely by her own inclination. This being the case, the only inference to be drawn from her subsequent proceedings was that her heart was touched by her old friend's forlorn condition, and by her pleasure in her society, to the exclusion of every other interest. The days ran on; a week, a fortnight went by; no word of any thought of returning to Whorlbeck was dropped by Miss Astell; apparently she had no other desire in life than to devote herself to Mrs. Cormack. Miss Astell and her brother had always lived their

lives as completely apart when she was staying in town, as when several counties divided them; that is to say they met frequently, and frequently went out together, but there was wont to be no mutual dependence about their plans. Now, however, Miss Astell seemed to assume, carelessly enough, that they had a common interest in their solicitude for Mrs. Cormack. Whenever Gerard was in Mrs. Cormack's house—and he was there more frequently than ever in these first days of heavy disappointment—his sister was with him; very often the initiative of their visits, an initiative which he never failed to follow, came from her.

It was to Mrs. Cormack, personally, that Miss Astell devoted herself. When Miss Brown was present she was invariably pleasant and attentive to the little old lady, drawing her into the conversation as far as was possible; she also paid a great deal of court to Tommy, in a careless and ironical fashion which betrayed the very slight sympathy she felt for childhood, and which Tommy requited with a frank dislike only partially suppressed in public by a severe strain on his good manners; but Brenda she was always inclined to ignore, leaving her consequently to Gerard for entertainment. All that carelessness of demeanour, that impatience of repetition, which had previously rendered her a somewhat unsatisfactory confidante, disappeared. She would sit with Mrs. Cormack by the hour, while Gerard and Brenda played or sang, or talked together, quiet and intent, and she would listen to any length of discursive monologue without a sign of irritation.

It was the evening of the fifth of February—a snowy, cold evening to the outside world. Mrs. Cormack's drawing-room, well warmed and well lighted, presented at about nine o'clock a picture which was characteristic of the whole fortnight which had elapsed since Miss Astell's arrival in town. At one end of the room, just visible through the opening made by the looping back of one of the curtains in the middle, Brenda and Gerard sat, one on each side of a small table. As the light fell on Brenda's face it showed it pale and sad, but with no touch of keen present distress about it. Gerard was teaching her to play chess. His instructions had been at first much confused and interrupted by the excited interest of Tommy; who had, to his own indignation, been conveyed to bed some half-hour before.

Near the fire, at the other end of the room, and with her back to the chess-players, sat Miss Brown knitting in industrious silence. Facing Miss Brown, comfortably ensconced in a large arm-chair, and actively engaged in a monologue, was Mrs. Cormack; and near her in passive receipt of that same monologue was Miss Astell. She was leaning a little forward, her chin resting on the palm of her hand as she supported her elbow on the arm of her chair; she was perfectly graceful and perfectly still, and she was gazing straight down the room to where Gerard and Brenda sat facing one another. She was very pale, and there was an intent watchfulness in every line of her face which had come to it during the last fortnight; which had so grown upon it during that short time that it never wholly left it, and seemed to have become a fundamental part of her expression; and which was as absolutely opposed to the nervous changefulness of her face during her first interview with her brother, on her arrival in town, as was the immobility of her pose now to her incessant restlessness on that occasion.

The practice of chess was apparently being abandoned by the master and pupil at the other end of the room for the theory. Only a low murmur of voices reached to the fireplace, but it was some time since Gerard or Brenda had moved a piece; and now Gerard, who was talking earnestly, his eyes fixed on the girlish face opposite him, moved, evidently unconsciously, and leaned his folded arms on the board, sweeping the men down right and left. No protest came from Brenda; evidently the havoc wrought was unobserved by her. She was listening intently with her eyes raised to his, a little flush on her cheeks; and as he paused she leaned forward and took up the word, speaking eagerly, almost vehemently.

Into the dark eyes fixed upon the two there came a curious gleam. Mrs. Cormack's monologue had come to a temporary pause, but Miss Astell made no comment, and there was a moment's silence in the room, broken only by the murmur of Brenda's voice and the click of Miss Brown's knitting-needles. Miss Brown was never to be seen without a dark-coloured stocking in some stage of its existence. As though some influence from her companion, some vague sense of that intense gaze, of the rigid concentration of the graceful figure by her side, touched her

in spite of herself, Mrs. Cormack followed the direction of those great dark eyes, and her next remarks took shape accordingly.

"What we should have done without Gerard, my dear, passes telling!" she said. "All this time we've been waiting for the news—such dreadful news, too, as I've been saying—he's just kept us all alive. In and out he's been every day, always cheering us up and always with something to suggest. There, he has been good!"

There was a moment's pause before Miss Astell answered. Her eyes were fixed full upon her brother. Then she moved deliberately and turned them upon Mrs. Cormack as she leaned back in her chair.

"Really?" she said, with a slight, slow smile. "Well, he would do his best, of course. Talking of suggestions, it was he who engaged Mr. Willoughby, wasn't it?"

"There wasn't anything he didn't do at that time!" replied Mrs. Cormack, with emphatic, affectionate gratitude. "Just took all the business into his hands and saw to it. It wasn't likely I should know anything about such things, now was it? I give you my word, Magdalen, I'd never seen a detective to know him until that young man came down to the Hall, and the turn it gave me I never shall forget!"

"And Gerard had great faith in the Australian clue?" remarked Miss Astell quietly, still with her eyes—which did not lose their watchfulness—on Mrs. Cormack's face.

Mrs. Cormack assented with a mournful nod.

"He always said, not to build too much upon it, you know! But all the same one couldn't help seeing that he thought it was pretty well a certainty. What is it, Martin?"

The last words were addressed to Tommy's friend, the footman, who had entered the room and was hesitating slightly. Thus addressed, he advanced to Mrs. Cormack and said:

"Mr. Ferrars, from Whorlbeck, is here, ma'am, and would like to speak to you."

Mr. Ferrars was the Vicar of Whorlbeck; a man who rarely came to town, and who was on terms of the merest conventional civility with his well-to-do parishioners. As the footman spoke, from each of the five people on whose ears his words fell there came some token of arrested attention and surprise. Brenda and Gerard rose simultaneously and came down the room, to join the group at the

other end. Miss Astell turned sharply towards the man, and her lips seemed to turn white. The words of surprise came from Mrs. Cormack and—less articulately—from Miss Brown.

"Mr. Ferrars!" exclaimed Mrs. Cormack. "Dear me! What a very odd thing! Is there anything the matter, should you think?"

Her rather startled eyes had turned questioningly and helplessly enough from Miss Astell to her brother. They rested appealingly on Gerard as she finished, and he answered quickly and gravely:

"Shall I go and see him for you, Mrs. Cormack? It would be better, perhaps!"

Mrs. Cormack's face expressed complete acquiescence in whatever he might choose to do, and he was turning towards the door when Miss Astell interposed. Her voice was peculiarly clear and dominating, though she did not raise it in the least. She was looking full into her brother's face.

"Stop, Gerard!" she said. "You are making a mistake. If there should be bad news, Mrs. Cormack would, I'm sure, rather not be kept in suspense. And bad news for her is bad news for all of us. Ask Mr. Ferrars to come up!" she added authoritatively to the footman.

A hardly audible exclamation of anger broke from Gerard as the man disappeared, and he flashed one wrathful glance at his sister. Then he drew back so that he stood once more by Brenda's side; he did not look at her; he was very pale, and he bit his lip savagely. Miss Astell took no further notice of him for the moment. She turned to Mrs. Cormack with a word or two of apology for the order she had given, and then a silence fell upon the room as steps were heard coming up the stairs.

"Mr. Ferrars!" announced the footman; and Mr. Ferrars, a middle-aged man, with sandy hair, and a fair, freckled face, made his appearance. He had evidently just come off a journey, and he was followed uncouthly and reluctantly enough by another man in the Sunday clothes of a farm labourer, who took up a position as near the door as might be.

Mr. Ferrars was not shy, but neither was he a particularly tactful or intelligent person. The first greetings were gone through, on his part, with a portentous solemnity and an entire absence of any attempt to simplify the position, which had a curiously chilling effect upon

the company in which he and his follower had made their unexpected appearance. By the time he was seated, a shadow, half of dread, half of expectancy, had fallen on each of the five faces—so different in everything else—turned towards him. Brenda was very pale. Gerard had pulled forward a chair for her, and was standing rather behind it, his eyes fixed angrily on Mr. Ferrars. On each of Miss Astell's white cheeks a streak of deep colour had made its appearance. Though her face was turned to Mr. Ferrars, her eyes roamed now and again towards her brother, and the watchfulness in them had intensified until it was almost terrible.

"You are, of course, surprised by this visit, Mrs. Cormack," began Mr. Ferrars slowly and sententiously. "I should have desired, as you will readily understand, to prepare you for it in some measure, but maturer thoughts convinced me that there should be as little delay as possible in bringing before you the facts with which I have to acquaint you. You will have concluded, possibly, that these facts refer to the mysterious and lamentable disappearance of your son?"

It was as though a cold breath from the thick darkness in which the fate of Basil Cormack was enwrapped had swept suddenly over the five listeners, producing as it passed a slight shuddering rustle. A slight gasp escaped Mrs. Cormack, and she grasped the arms of her chair tightly. Neither Miss Astell, Gerard, nor Brenda moved at all; and yet that cold breath touched them and left a subtle trace upon each still, expectant figure.

"Late last night," continued Mr. Ferrars, "George Wharton, Mr. Harrison's ploughman, came to me with some property which he had accidentally lighted upon in the course of the afternoon—or evening. This is Wharton."

With these words Mr. Ferrars indicated the embarrassed man in the background; and the introduction was acknowledged on his part by a hasty pull at his forelock and a gruff—

"Servant, marm!"

"I have taken the liberty of undertaking," continued Mr. Ferrars, "that he shall be asked no questions as to how he came to be digging in Arsdale Spinney; but digging there he was, when his spade or pick struck against something hard. His curiosity was aroused, and he finally unearthed what proved to be a watch with chain and seals attached. A little further



search added to this discovery a seal ring. These things he brought to me, that I might decide as to what should be done with them. A very superficial removal of the tarnish with which the metal was obscured was quite sufficient to show me the grave importance of his treasure-trove."

He paused, and a quick, uneven whisper came from Mrs. Cormack. Her face was ashen and tremulous.

"Not Basil's?" she said. "You—you don't mean they're—Basil's?"

For all answer Mr. Ferrars rose solemnly, took from his pocket a small sealed packet and placed it in her hands. She looked around her, trembling pitifully.

"I—I can't——" she began. But before her sentence was finished Miss Astell answered the tacit appeal. She took the packet from her hands and opened it; stared down for one moment at its contents with strange grey shadows growing round her mouth and eyes, and then held them forth on the palm of her hand in the midst of a dead silence. A little heap of blackened, earth-grimed metal—watch, chain, seals, and ring; and uppermost, shining out with an effect that was indescribably weird, the small patch of gold which had been burnished, on which stood out in red enamel the initials B.C.

There was a moment's awful stillness; such a stillness as might have received the missing man himself had he suddenly appeared among them, a disembodied spirit; as all those startled eyes fastened upon the first trace of Basil Cormack, as he had last been seen, which had been revealed for five long months. Then with a choking cry Brenda turned away, and buried her face in her trembling hands.

Her movement seemed to break the spell. With a half-bewildered, half-hysterical sob, Mrs. Cormack stretched out her hands and took the mute witness from Miss Astell. Miss Astell relinquished it mechanically, almost unconsciously as it seemed. She was looking straight before her into vacancy, her face grey and drawn; her great eyes like the eyes of a blind woman.

Gerard lifted his face, white to the lips, and spoke to the labourer. His voice was hoarse and peremptory.

"Where was this found—exactly where?" he said.

"In Arsdale Spinney, as I understand," answered Mr. Ferrars, evidently feeling that the time had not yet come for his

retirement from his prominent position. "As soon as I became aware of the grave importance of the discovery, I determined to bring the things myself to London. I thought it better that Wharton should accompany me, in order that no discrepancies or mistakes—purely inadvertent as they would have been, of course—might creep into the narrative. Wharton, tell Mr. Astell exactly where it was."

"But what—what does it mean? Mr. Ferrars—Gerard, my dear—tell me, what do you think it means?"

The words came from Mrs. Cormack in a thin, quivering tone, and Gerard turned sharply to Mr. Ferrars with a sign of warning. But Mr. Ferrars was a gentleman on whom signs were thrown away.

"I fear it points to but one conclusion!" he said ponderously. "Foul play!"

There was a wild shriek from Mrs. Cormack, and Gerard and Brenda sprang towards her just in time to catch her as she flung herself upon the girl's neck in violent hysterics.

#### CHAPTER XL S.C.A.M.P.

It was a heavy February day; the grey skies, from which, until some forty-eight hours previously, steady, continuous rain had descended for nearly three weeks, seemed to press closely down on the earth, shutting out both light and air. Everything in nature was sodden and dripping, beaten down and hopeless, still, from the pitiless soaking; and as yet, in Yorkshire at least, no signs or promises of spring brought assurance of better times to come.

Arsdale Spinney was not a cheerful place at the best of times. It lay in a steep hollow, which dipped down behind the gardens at the back of Arsdale House; and whether from its position geologically considered, or whether from the loneliness of its situation—no road or lane, except the track through Arsdale Park, ran within five miles of it—there was about it, even on the brightest summer day, a certain atmosphere of stagnation, a stillness which was not the stillness of peace, but of gloom and decay. On this particular February day, with moisture dripping from every branch of the trees as they stood motionless—lifeless as it seemed—in the dank, oppressive atmosphere; with all its withered bracken and undergrowth hanging sodden and heavy; with no sound, or motion, or touch of colour through all its length

and breadth ; it was as dreary a place as could well be imagined.

It was about three o'clock when its grim quiet was disturbed — if disturbance it could be called. A woman's figure, dressed in a dark grey gown which harmonised with the grey monotony of the landscape, crossed the piece of ground — half field, half common — that separated the Spinney from the park, and turned into one of the sodden, rain-washed tracks that wound round and round among the trees. The figure was Miss Astell's.

Three weeks had passed since the unexpected appearance of the Vicar of Whorlbeck in Mrs. Cormack's London drawing-room. During those three weeks, through all the soaking rains and mists, emissaries from Scotland Yard had tolled unremittingly, stimulated into feverish energy by the labourer's discovery in Arsdale Spinney, searching the country-side, and searching it in vain, for some further and more conclusive trace of the missing man. The disappearance theory had given way completely. The discovery of the watch worn by Basil Cormack on the night of the dance pointed, in the mind of the authority in charge of the case, to murder ; and the real object of the subsequent search was Basil Cormack's body.

Mrs. Cormack was lying ill in London. Miss Astell had excited singularly mixed feelings in her brother, compounded of hardly-to-be-concealed indignation at her desertion and obvious relief at her departure, by announcing — her announcement coinciding with the institution of that fresh search of the neighbourhood of Arsdale — that business called her home ; and those three weeks of wet weather had been spent by her alone at the Cottage.

It was natural enough, she herself carelessly permitting it, that Miss Astell, as the closest friend of the Cormack family at hand, should be kept constantly informed of the progress of the search by those engaged in it ; though the detective in charge never clearly understood how it came about that he gradually came to consider himself as in some way responsible to the handsome woman who was only "a friend of the family." He never clearly understood either how it came about that during the third and last week of the search he presented himself at the Cottage with his report on the conclusion of his day's work as regularly as he would have presented himself at the Hall had Mrs. Cormack been at home. He was not

even aware of the singularity of the position until the last day of that fruitless search drew to a close. On presenting himself before Miss Astell, to acquaint her with the fact that all hope of further discoveries was practically at an end, and to lay before her his own view of the case — a view which for him had all the validity of proven facts — he found himself treated with a high-bred insolence of contempt that stung his professional pride to the quick, and awoke him to a sense of what he afterwards described as his "great mistake in humouring a lady's curiosity."

It was on the afternoon after this interview, the detective and his men having left Arsdale that same morning, that the gloomy stillness of Arsdale Spinney was broken, as has been described, by the appearance of Miss Astell. Miss Astell had become a great walker in the course of the last three weeks, in spite of the weather. It was intolerable in the house, she said carelessly to her servants ; and accordingly she had taken long walks about the country. The seven miles between Whorlbeck Cottage and Arsdale Spinney, whither her walks led her constantly, were, it seemed, as nothing to her.

But she did not look now, as she moved among the dripping trees and bracken there, as though her inclination for walking exercise were the result of superabundant physical strength. She was thin to the point of attenuation. Her face was haggard and worn, and her wonderful black hair only served to throw into relief the dead white of her complexion, untouched by colour even about the lips, except when now and then a bright patch of red colour appeared on her thin cheeks. Her eyes were hollow and sunken, and as she lifted them now and then in the utter loneliness of the wood, they gazed about her with a fierce, half-desperate light in their beautiful depths. For the most part, however, she kept them fastened on the ground, every line of her white face set into a terrible intentness, as she poked and pushed at the rain-washed ground, over which she passed so slowly, with a strong walking-stick that she carried in her hand.

It was likely to take many more than forty-eight hours' absence of rain to make any decisive effect upon the ground in Arsdale Spinney. During the past week little streams had collected and poured down the wooded sides of the hollow from all directions, washing down earth, small

pebbles, débris of all kinds. The heart of the Spinney, consequently, lying low in the centre of the hollow, was little better than a swamp, though the streams which had created that swamp had by this time ceased to do more than trickle here and there. But neither mud nor pools of water seemed to affect Miss Astell's progress in the least; she made no attempt to keep even to such tracks as were left, but moved slowly on, always with that strong prodding movement of her stick, and always turning in that direction in which lay the softest mud and the deepest bracken.

Nearly an hour had passed since she entered the wood, and she had never paused for an instant. Her steps were bent, evidently unconsciously, up the incline, when, in her intense absorption in that searching, testing movement of her stick, she stumbled, and would have fallen had she not caught instinctively at the trunk of a tree. The shock, the physical jar and strain involved, seemed to break up her absolutely self-oblivious concentration, and in the reaction a consciousness of physical exhaustion seemed to assert itself. The set, intent lines of her face, broken up, relaxed into the unstrung tremulousness of all-dominating fatigue. She leaned back heavily against the tree by which she had saved herself, and her haggard eyes turned from side to side as though she were realising, at once, her actual whereabouts and something less tangible which was absolutely hopeless and baffling.

She was standing on the steepest slope of the hill close to a wide, washed track, which three days before had been a rushing stream. Directly in front of her rose a gigantic oak-tree, over one of the far-reaching roots of which she had stumbled. It stood directly in the course of what had been the rain-stream, and round its base the earth had been washed away in large quantities, leaving exposed great gnarled and twisted roots forming great cavities, and taking weird and fantastic shapes.

Miss Astell stood there, weighted as it seemed for the moment by sheer physical incapacity to proceed; her face eloquent at once of overwhelming pain and weariness, and of mental realisation which was no less bitter and unconquerable. By-and-by she began to move her stick to and fro once more, but the movement was only a mechanical expression of restless thought, now; there was no purpose or intention in its slow, slack movements. It was not

until something struck against her foot that she started and glanced down.

From one of the cavities under the roots of the tree, in which she had been unconsciously turning her stick, she had knocked out the little bleached bone of some small animal. She moved her foot with a quick repulsion and glanced involuntarily at the hole as she drew her stick away. It had caught and stuck fast; she gave it a sharp pull, and it came away with something hanging to the ferrule at the end. It was a rotten, earth-spoiled, weather-spoiled strip of what had once been leather, and as it fell from the stick a metal plate still attached to it struck against a stone.

In a flash, all trace of weariness gone as if by magic, Miss Astell had fallen on her knees on the wet ground; her face quivering with life, her eyes flashing with desperate expectancy; and was groping madly in the dark holes and hollows under the roots with her bare hands; digging and tearing as though she would tear out such secret as might be buried among those roots if she tore up the tree itself in the passion of her fictitious strength. One after another, with her hands scratched and bleeding as they had never been in all her life before, she drew out five or six more bleached bones—the bones of a little animal—clutching at them and examining them with a callousness which contrasted grimly with her first movement of repulsion. At last no more were forthcoming, and as they lay in a little heap before her, still kneeling there and with a white intensity of excitement on her face terrible to see, she snatched up the rotten piece of leather and began to rub wildly—using her handkerchief, her gloves, her dress—at the blackened piece of metal. Slowly under that relentless friction the blackness yielded, and signs of letters engraved beneath appeared. Miss Astell redoubled her efforts, rubbing as though for life itself, and gradually the letters took a faint, blurred shape.

S C A M P.

The word stood out—above a line or two of smaller letters—dim, hardly legible, but unmistakeable, and as her great eyes fastened on it a strange hissing breath parted Miss Astell's lips, and her hands sank slowly, as she gazed down at the strip of leather with her face like a marble mask. She knelt there motionless, and absolute stillness and silence was all about

her. At last she slowly raised her face and looked upwards. It was set and grey, and every one of its drawn, tense lines was touched by the light of pitiless determination with which her eyes were absolutely alive.

That night Miss Astell startled her servants by a sudden departure to London. Among the luggage which she took with her was a little leather despatch-box, which never left her hand. Her first proceeding on the following morning was a visit, not to her brother and not to Mrs. Cormack, but to a certain celebrated private enquiry office.

#### CHAPTER XII. "FOR YOUR SAKE."

THOSE three weeks of pouring rain which had reduced Arsdale Spinney to a swamp, had passed very slowly and wearily in Mrs. Cormack's house in London.

During the fortnight following the evening of Mr. Ferrars' arrival with the jewellery discovered in Arsdale Spinney, Mrs. Cormack had been very ill. She was carried up to her room from the drawing-room that evening, completely unconscious; and Brenda sent the next day, in anxiety and haste, for a trained nurse. For a short time Mrs. Cormack hovered on the verge of very serious illness, and Brenda's pale face grew day by day, with the morning reports from the sick-room, more overclouded with anxiety; while poor little Miss Brown went about on tip-toe, a little, meek, silent shadow of distress.

Then, being constitutionally strong, Mrs. Cormack began to throw off her actual illness, and emerged from the merciful shadow of unconsciousness that had swept from her mind all the details of the shock she had received. Slowly and by painful degrees, each of which was an additional pain to Brenda's heart, she recalled all that had happened; very slowly she readjusted her mind, as it were, to the position of affairs; and as the days of her convalescence went on, it became an evident relief to her to talk of Basil, and of every possibility and probability connected with the horror of Mr. Ferrars' discovery.

Thus, by the time the search was abandoned as hopeless by the authorities at Scotland Yard, and a final report of the case was submitted by them, she was able to hear it from Gerard Astell with tolerable composure.

That same report was as conclusive as the total absence of all proof would allow it to be. The theory held by the detective who had conducted the case from the first, and concurred in by his colleagues, was simple and concise enough. He held that Basil Cormack had been decoyed away from his own house on the night of the dance, by some person or persons unknown, and had been murdered by him, or them; the scene of the murder being, in all probability, Arsdale Spinney. The burial of the watch and ring, they maintained, pointed to some motive other than robbery for the crime; and the latter motive was rendered more unlikely by the fact that a man would not be considered likely to have much money about him on such an occasion as a dance.

The true motive was to them, as to the outside world, wrapped in hopeless mystery, and was likely to remain so. For it must, they argued, be of necessity connected with some secret in the life of the missing man, which secret five months' close investigation had failed to reveal. Some hopeless entanglement, some powerful influence, some desperate necessity; each and all of these might, and one of them must, they maintained, have existed in Basil Cormack's life.

For the failure to discover the body of the murdered man, the report accounted to the complete satisfaction of Scotland Yard.

Not far from Arsdale Spinney was one of those curious bottomless pools or tarns, not uncommon in Yorkshire; and into this, which went by the ominous name of the "Drowning Pot," the body had doubtless been thrown; the murderer having first stripped it of its valuables, and buried them in Arsdale Spinney for temporary safety, intending to return for them; subsequently abandoning this intention, however, as too dangerous.

And this report, so terribly consistent alike with the facts and their limits, the conclusions of which were in no wise to be argued away, carried a cruel conviction to the minds of the friends of the missing man. With its acceptance there fell upon the household of Basil Cormack's mother, that solemn calm which means the dreadful ending of a dreadful suspense; the certainty which is endurable inasmuch as it is not doubt. A few quiet words passed between Brenda and Mrs. Cormack, and coloured dresses gave way throughout the house to mourning. And then a quiet life, almost of routine, set in; a life which

in its uneventful placidity was strangely like the life of the early part of the winter.

The resemblance was there, but the dissimilarity was far greater. The quiet, the gradual assimilation of other interests, which had been unconscious and unrecognised before was deliberate and sought for now; and the hush was the hush of acceptance, not the lull of temporary distraction. Mrs. Cormack herself did not recover her strength completely; she remained a semi-invalid, needing constant attention from a woman who was half nurse, half maid. But perhaps the greatest difference of all lay about Brenda and Gerard Astell.

The weeks that followed the definite suggestion of Basil Cormack's murder seemed to change Brenda, as they passed, from a girl to a woman. The childishness which the first agony of horror took from her face never returned to it, and as her gentle, equable calm returned to her it brought a graver, sweeter, more serious charm than she had ever possessed before. A certain haunting sadness that never wholly left her eyes gave them a loveliness which the eyes of the Brenda Stanfield of a year ago had lacked utterly.

To her relations with Gerard Astell, too, there had come a subtle alteration—or, perhaps, developement. During the first two weeks of Mrs. Cormack's illness Gerard had been the girl's one comforter and counsellor. Except for him she had been utterly alone. In him she had found a constant fund of sympathy, strength, encouragement, as full of tact and delicacy as of feeling; and it would have been strange indeed if the bonds woven in those days of suffering could have been lightly broken. After Mrs. Cormack's comparative recovery, the abandonment of the search at Arsdale, and the general settling down that ensued, Gerard was no less frequently in the house, no less the chief prop and stay of the little party it held. Any other visitor from the outside world rarely crossed its threshold. Poor Mrs. Cormack was too much of a social anomaly to have any intimate friends, and she was understood by her acquaintances to be in strict retirement in consequence of her bereavement. Miss Astell was in London, not having returned to Whorlbeck again after her sudden departure from it, but she was seldom seen. Consequently for days together the only breaks in Brenda's monotonous life were Gerard Astell's visits.

But the sympathy and the encourage-

ment which existed between them were not all on the one side. It was common talk among his acquaintances as the March weeks ran into April that Astell was "down on his luck," and looked "uncommonly seedy"; but as a rider was usually added by the commentators to the effect that he was "never to the fore now-days," the comments themselves soon died out for want of nourishment. As a matter of fact, Gerard was changing day by day. The dissipated look of ill-health gradually disappeared, and his dark, ugly face grew pale and sharpened as the face of a man under severe physical training will sometimes become. The recklessness and the cynicism faded out before a resolute expression of endurance and determination, which gave his deep-set eyes a steady light. Sometimes there would be harassed lines about his mouth, and a repressed weariness about his whole demeanour which seemed to tell of almost insurmountable difficulties or troubles. And when he came to Mrs. Cormack's house with such a look about him, he never left it without a moment or two alone with Brenda, brought about no one could have said how; a moment during which the girl's face would glow and quiver with a sympathy at once strong and tender, and absolutely devoid of self-consciousness, as a few sentences only, perhaps, passed between them; a moment which left the man with the wearied lines smoothed out and a new endurance in their place.

The first spring weather came early in April that year, and with the first warm sunshine, the first balmy breezes, there came the first suggestion of possible change in the quiet, uneventful London life. Mrs. Cormack grew restless; the heat tried her, physically; and she began to talk vaguely of going back to Whorlbeck Hall for the summer. Brenda and Gerard were unanimous in deprecating for her the nervous strain inseparable from any change, and the painful associations which Whorlbeck must revive; and they devoted themselves to dissipating the idea with a delicate tact and tenderness which was scarcely less marked in the man than in the girl. But the notion was not to be disposed of. Mrs. Cormack's first vague fancy developed into a settled nervous desire; and tacitly, no word passing between them on the subject, Gerard and Brenda ceased to oppose her. A suggestion made by Gerard that any place—Brighton, for instance—would be better than Yorkshire, was

almost fretfully negatived by Mrs. Cormack. And by the third week in April it was settled that in ten days' time the household should move to the Hall.

Still no word passed on the subject between Gerard and Brenda; a certain harassed depression developed in the former, and Brenda, presumably, was oppressed by the thought of returning to Yorkshire, for she became subdued and grave. Their brief interviews were longer and more frequent, as though from an unexpressed sense that discussion of some common interest must be compressed into the short time remaining.

It was two days before the day fixed for the journey from town to Yorkshire, and Brenda was alone in the drawing-room. Mrs. Cormack had taken a sudden fancy about half an hour before, to go for a drive; and had set out, accordingly, with Miss Brown and Tommy, whose childish chatter was one of the few pleasures of her life.

Thus left to herself a curious restless excitement, most unusual to her, seemed to take possession of Brenda. She had looked at the clock—it was half-past three—and had then established herself with a book, a little faint flush on her cheeks. The clock struck four before she turned a page, and then she rose, and going to the window stood there for some time looking out, an anxious fold in her smooth forehead, the flush deepening in her cheeks. She turned away restlessly at last with a quick little sigh. At that very moment the door-bell rang, and she turned quickly towards the door with eager eyes, her whole face eloquent of anxious anticipation. The door opened and Gerard Astell came in. Brenda made no attempt to receive him. She stood where she was in absolute self-oblivion.

"Well?" she said breathlessly. "Well?"

"It's all right!" he answered in the same tense, excited tone. "I've got it!"

He had come straight up to her, his worn face all aglow with triumph and delight, and she put out her hand to him impulsively, all the anxiety in her face melting in a smile of infinite congratulation. She did not speak, and he held her hand fast for a moment in silence, their eyes, all unconscious as they were of the fact, saying infinitely more than lips could have said. Then he released her hand rather abruptly.

Brenda moved and sat down on a low chair near the window; and he followed

her example rather mechanically. As the first glow of excitement passed from him, a vague depression and constraint seemed to creep into his manner. From Brenda, also, the intensity of that first moment passed away, but it left her calmly, radiantly happy.

"I am so glad!" she said softly. "So very, very glad! It is a start, isn't it, and a good start!"

He answered her bright smile with another which had something rather sad about it.

"Yes!" he said. "It is work, regular work, and lasting work; a good start, as you say!"

"And it leads to better things; it may lead to anything almost—you told me so, didn't you?"

Brenda's pretty voice had taken an encouraging note which was very womanly and sweet, and her eyes were fixed on him observantly as though she hardly understood his tone.

"Yes; it's not without possibilities!" he assented, with an absence of elasticity which contrasted markedly with the elation of his first announcement. "But, of course, they are only possibilities."

"At present!" returned Brenda brightly, her face growing strong and hopeful. "Things can't develop all at once, can they? It means a lot of hard work, I know, but the work itself is worth having, isn't it?"

There was no childishness, no weakness in the words, simple as they were; it was the womanly Brenda developed in the course of the past three months who spoke. Gerard listened to her with a look that was almost dreamy on his face, and as he answered only with a vague gesture of assent, she went on with a ring of enthusiasm in her voice:

"You've been working hard all this time in another way! I know that quite well; I don't believe anything that can come can be much worse than what you've gone through already. And you have been so resolute and strong! Oh, I know—I know quite well how hard it has been for you!"

A little smile touched Gerard's lips as the earnest, vibrating voice ceased; it was the smile of a man who, while he receives appreciation that is sweet to him, knows that such realisation as might render that appreciation to some extent justifiable is absolutely impossible for his critic.

Gerard Astell had done that during the

last two months, of which no woman, possibly, could understand the strain and the cost; of which even those male critics who passed careless comments to the effect that "Astell was a reformed character," or "Astell seemed to be pulling in," by no means understood the significance. He had completely altered his mode of life. He had broken with all his associates; he had cut himself off from everything that had hitherto made alike the pleasure and business of his life; and he had faced the consequences he had brought upon himself, in the shape of heavy liabilities and absence of any legitimate source of income, by making a humble and straightforward appeal to the only male relative he possessed in the world. The appeal had been responded to coldly and grudgingly, but practically. And all sorts of painful, dragging delays had resulted at last in such a measure of freedom from debt as was necessary for a fresh start in life, and finally in the obtaining for Gerard of a post involving plenty of hard work for a salary of four pounds a week.

It was the steps towards these ends, with all the endless complications involved, that had been the subject of all the talks between himself and Brenda which the past months had witnessed. It was their final consummation which he had just declared to her. He had confided in her, and she had sustained his failing energies and courage again and again; and yet, as he listened to her enthusiastic words of admiration, he smiled, as a man will where a woman is concerned—even when her admiration is most soothing and most necessary to him—to think of the depths beyond her ken.

But the smile faded quickly, and an indefinable expression of which the only distinct characteristic was a great weariness, settled down on his face. He shook his head, with a slight movement of his hand which seemed to set aside her praise; and was silent.

A shade of anxiety crept over Brenda's face, and she watched him for a moment without speaking.

"You are tired!" she said gently. "Too tired to look forward, I'm afraid. It is no wonder, after all the worry that you've had." There was a slight touch of disappointment in her voice as she went on. "It all seems flat and tedious, now the suspense and the anxiety are over, I dare say. By-and-by it will look different. We won't talk of the future!"

He lifted his head slowly and looked at her. And as he met her eyes, all the lines of his face changed under a sudden wave of passion, and he broke into a harsh, choking laugh.

"The future!" he cried. "No! we won't talk of the future! Brenda, Brenda, don't you know that the future is nothing to me, that life is one grey, monotonous grind to me, when I think of facing it without you? Brenda, don't you understand?"

He had started desperately to his feet, and she shrank back a little in her chair, looking up at him with every trace of colour or expression gone from her face, leaving nothing but a breathless, unutterable wonder, and a strange, undeclared glimmer of light in her eyes. He went on in a voice choked with emotion, his face working convulsively:

"I didn't meant to speak, Brenda! I know—I know it's not the time, and I'm a cad to do it. Brenda, what have I got to offer you? But I love you so, dear! I've loved you all the time! It was because of you, because of what you are, because I felt that I was a sweep not fit to touch your hand, that I've tried to get straight. If I ever come to any good it will be your doing twice over, for you've made me see it and you've kept me to it, Brenda. Without your sympathy and your strength I shouldn't have been strong enough! I know that! And how can I hold on without you? I don't mean to threaten you, dear"—the struggle in his face was pitiful to see—"I'll try to go straight even if— But how can I!"

There was a choked, despairing ring in his voice which made it as unlike the voice of the Gerard Astell of ordinary life as his passionate abandonment was unlike the careless, easy-going composure of his everyday demeanour. The man seemed to be utterly carried out of himself. He did not see the spreading of that light in the face upturned to him, nor did he hear the little tender cry with which the girl half stretched out her hands to him.

"Look here, dear!" he went on thickly. "I know I oughtn't to have spoken yet. It was the getting this thing and the feeling that it might all be nothing after all, that was too much for me! That, and the thought of what London will be when you're gone! I don't ask you to answer me yet. I know it's all too recent! Perhaps you'll loathe me for even hoping that you might come to care for any other fellow! But Cormack—"

Brenda interrupted him. She threw out her hands with a cry, and clasped them over her face.

"Ah, don't!" she cried. "Don't! You make me feel so wicked! I didn't love him! I never knew it till that night before he went away! I never thought what love meant until it came so near—our marriage, I mean! And I began to think and I tried to ask him! That very night on the balcony! And when he kissed me I knew. I knew that it was all a dreadful, horrible mistake, and I didn't love him!"

Her breath was coming in quick, sobbing gasps, and for the moment Gerard stood looking down at her, his face pale, his eyes gleaming strangely, his teeth set. Then he said, and the words seemed to come from between his clenched teeth, so rigid was the hold he kept upon himself:

"You knew it then!" He paused a moment as though his feeling would not let him speak, and then went on slowly: "Is there a chance—is there any chance for me?"

The last words were scarcely audible, but Brenda heard them. She moved, lifted her face from her hands, and raised it to his. And as his eyes fell on it, Gerard fell on his knees and caught her unresisting in his arms.

How many moments passed before either of them moved neither ever knew. But when Brenda lifted her face at last, it was a face which the man who was once to have been her husband had never seen. In the instinctive effort to help and encourage Gerard Astell in his movement towards the right; an effort made in such absolute innocence and unconsciousness of her growing love for him as perhaps only her strange position as the betrothed wife of a vanished man could have rendered possible; strength which might have remained for ever undeveloped in her gentle character, had matured rapidly. And in the love with which her face was full as she raised it from Gerard's shoulder all that strength and all the depth of her womanhood was concentrated.

He took her face gently between his hands and kissed it, and then she drew away from him, leaving her hand in his as she said in a low voice:

"Gerard, there is something I must say!" A certain agitation had been growing in her face, and she glanced at him appealingly.

"What is it, dearest?"

"I can never be happy until we know

for certain what really happened to Basil! Don't think me unreasonable, Gerard, but the thought haunts me! Don't you see"—her voice grew low and tremulous—"if I had cared as I ought, it would all be so different! But I can never be at peace until we have some proof that I am free!"

There was a moment's silence, and Gerard's hold on her hands tightened.

"Do you mean that you will not marry me until there is proof?"

She leaned towards him impulsively, her face tremulous and imploring.

"Oh, not quite that!" she cried piteously. "I know there may never be proof! But if only there could be! Gerard dear, we can say nothing yet of this—of us, I mean. It would—poor Aunt Sarah would be so hurt!" Her face was one burning flush as she spoke, low and hurriedly. "If before the end of the year we could know something, you don't know—I could never tell you what it would be to me!"

He looked full into her face for a moment, his own rather white and set. Then he bent his head and pressed his lips to her hand.

"If anything is ever to be known, Brenda, I will know it for your sake!" he said.

#### CHAPTER XIII. A NEW DETECTIVE.

WHETHER or no Mrs. Cormack obtained the satisfaction she had expected from the removal to Whorlbeck Hall—and an access of querulous nervousness which followed on that step seemed to prove the contrary; whether or no a certain quiet brightness about Brenda was or was not to be referred to it; there was one member of the household to whom the change brought absolute, unalloyed content, and that member was Tommy. He had become a permanent part of that same household. In the beginning of the winter, Tommy's delicate and overworked father had too surely fulfilled the dreary prediction made for him by Mrs. Cormack, by dying of bronchitis, leaving Tommy's young and distracted mother to cope as best she could with nine children and an income of something under a hundred a year.

Under these circumstances, Mrs. Cormack's prompt offer to keep Tommy, and, as she herself expressed her views, "to see to him till he was big enough to see to himself," was only too thankfully accepted. And Tommy, whose own assent to the



arrangement was an extremely ready one, had settled down as if he had never known any other home.

He had found life in London during the past three months a flat, stale, and unprofitable affair indeed. Early in his experience of it he had announced that there was "no out-of-doors, and nothing to do" in London. He had further summed up its characteristics by complaining that the great city presented a monotonous sameness in its merchandise.

"There's nothing, never, but hats and dresses and pocket-handkerchiefs in the shops," he said bitterly, after a shopping expedition with his nurse.

During the early half of the winter he had derived great consolation from the attentions of Gerard Astell. Latterly, however, in the stress of worry that Gerard had passed through, he had had but little time for Tommy, whose existence, in consequence, had been dull indeed.

For the first week after their return to Whorlbeck, Tommy was rarely in the house at all, except for meals. His little figure was to be met with everywhere and in every direction out of doors, as he rushed about, half-wild with the freedom and the exercise, radiant with childish satisfaction, and instituting on his own account a strict inquisition into all that had transpired in his absence in the garden, stable, and dairy, as he renewed his acquaintance with every man and boy about the place. It was quite impossible for Tommy to come into contact with any human being without immediately throwing out lines for friendly and confidential relation with them. His "own garden" he discovered, to his huge delight, to be sadly in need of attention. This vast domain, measuring, perhaps, four feet square, was situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the carriage drive—a site selected by Tommy because, as he explained confidentially:

"Then I can see if any one comes, and it'll be some one to talk to, you know!"

And on a sunny Thursday afternoon about ten days after the move from London, he settled down to the cultivation of his estate with a vigour which seemed to be only intensified by the heat.

He had been digging with an energy which would have done credit to a day labourer, his straw hat flung on the ground beside him, his little figure braced and active, his childish face set into an expression of stern resolution, until at last the

moisture with which his curly hair lay damp and straight upon his forehead, began to trickle down his face. He paused with a sigh of enjoyment and fatigue, and leaning on his little spade with a deliberate and careful imitation of the pose of his model, the under-gardener, under similar circumstances, he proceeded to mop his crimson face with a singularly grimy little pocket-handkerchief. As he did so he glanced in the direction of the drive, as though the appearance of "some one to talk to" would be by no means inopportune at this juncture. And on the instant away went spade, pocket-handkerchief, and pose, as he suddenly began to scamper down the drive towards the gate as fast as his short, white-trousered legs could carry him, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Mr. Astell! Why, Mr. Astell, I didn't know you were coming!"

Gerard Astell had just opened the gate and was coming up briskly in the direction of the house. He greeted the boy with a laugh of satisfaction.

"Didn't you, Tommy?" he said. "How are you?"

Gerard's face was like his voice, full of satisfaction, though there was a strong underlying purpose about it, too. He was looking very well, wiry though thin, and a certain grave determination about his face by no means overshadowed it.

"I'm quite well, thank you!" responded Tommy, capering wildly before him. "I say, Mr. Astell, is it a s'prise? It'll be an awfully nice s'prise for Aunt Sarah, for she keeps on saying that she wishes you was here, and it's so lonely. It's quite a mistake of her to think it's lonely, because there's lots of people she could have to keep her company—much more than there were in London; but still, I know she does think so, because I heard her say so to Brenda this morning."

"And what did Brenda say?" said Gerard, with a little laugh, as the rapid, excited, childish voice paused for breath.

"Oh, Brenda—I don't think she said anything! But it'll be a nice s'prise for her, too, I expect!" returned Tommy graciously. "Come along in and s'prise them, do, Mr. Astell!"

Mrs. Cormack, Miss Brown, and Brenda were all together in the drawing-room when Tommy led in what he announced as a "s'prise"; and Mrs. Cormack's demonstrations of astonishment and delight at the unexpected appearance of Gerard Astell were all that even Tommy could have

hoped. Into Brenda's face there rushed a soft warm flush of glad amazement as her eyes lighted up into a wonderful loveliness. A hand-shake and the briefest greeting passed between her and Gerard as their eyes met for one moment only, and then she drew into the back-ground, busying herself with the tea-table, while a torrent of questions and delighted ejaculations flowed from Mrs. Cormack.

It was a pleasure to see him, to be sure, she said. They had seen no one at all since they left London, and really she wasn't sure—it was so very dull after all, and so full of dreadful recollections—whether she had done well in coming back. Here a hot wave of colour swept over Brenda's face. And when did Gerard arrive, and how long could he stop? And wouldn't he put up at the Hall, instead of at the Cottage, since his sister was still in London? How was his sister, and when was she coming down to Yorkshire?

To all these questions and many more, interspersed with a great variety of lamentation, Gerard replied with the easy, cheery mixture of kindness and fun which had always proved Mrs. Cormack's best tonic. He had arrived about an hour ago, it appeared, and had walked straight up from the Cottage. He could only stay till Monday, but he hoped Mrs. Cormack was prepared to put up with a great deal of his society in the interval. He would sleep at the Cottage, he said, but he proposed to spend all his waking hours at the Hall. He had not seen his sister for some time, and he had no idea when she proposed to return to Whorlbeck.

An hour had passed, and Mrs. Cormack was looking happier than she had looked for many days, when Gerard rose and put down his teacup.

"I thought of a walk before dinner," he said lightly. "Good for a fellow after being shut up in London, Mrs. Cormack. Tommy," he added, turning to the small figure upon which the announcement had had much the same stiffening effect as it would have had upon a terrier, "like a walk?" Tommy's sentiments were briefly but rapturously expressed, and then Gerard turned to Brenda. "Perhaps you would come with us?" he said hesitatingly.

Before Brenda could do more than shake her head with disappointed eyes, Mrs. Cormack broke in vociferously.

"What a pity now, Brenda! You'd have enjoyed a little change, I know. She's got a girl from the village coming to

see her, Gerard, so of course she can't go. Tommy, you must go and have your face and hands washed, dear child."

Not even the delightful prospect before him could wholly reconcile Tommy to this ordeal, which he looked upon as one of the totally unnecessary trials of his life created by amiable but painfully misguided elders; and he departed reluctantly, accompanied for his support under affliction by Mrs. Cormack herself. As they left the room a word passed between Gerard and Brenda, and they stepped out of the long window into the garden.

"You're not angry with me, Brenda? You don't mind my coming?"

The words came from Gerard, low and eagerly, the instant they were alone, and Brenda turned her face towards him and met his eyes, as she answered softly and quickly. Both were conscious that they had only a few moments together.

"You know—you know how—glad I am!" she said. "But is it wise, Gerard dear?"

"It's all right," he returned eagerly, answering her face rather than her words. "I'm not idling, Brenda. I don't get into regular harness until Monday. And I haven't come to see you, dear—not altogether, that's to say." The deep-set eyes smiled merrily for a moment, and then grew graver as he went on rapidly: "Brenda, I've come down because of what I promised you to do. I've thought about it, since, incessantly, and the search must start from Arsdale. You see, all one's thoughts start from there. So having these few days, I've just run down to try and make some kind of beginning. One never knows what may not come of going over old ground with new determination. I can but try, at all events."

The colour had died out of Brenda's face as he began to speak, and her eyes were full of an imploring gratitude.

"Oh, Gerard, thank you!" she whispered hurriedly. "Thank you! Dear, I can't tell you what it will be to me to know that you have begun! Don't think me unreasonable or fanciful, Gerard, but I am haunted by the thought of—of Basil. Now that we are so happy I can't forget him; I feel as though I were doing something dishonourable! Gerard, I can't help it, but I shall never, never have any peace until we know something certain."

Her voice was trembling as she finished, and her lips were trembling, too. There was a pale determination on Gerard's face

as he met her imploring eyes and answered:

"I know, Brenda; I feel it too. We must know! Hullo, Tommy," he added, changing his tone on the instant, and turning quickly, so as to stand between Brenda and the window whence Tommy, a model sailor boy newly soaped and brushed, had loudly announced his readiness. "Come on, old man. Where shall we go, eh?"

It transpired, as the two walked down to the lodge gates together, that Tommy had a particular friend in the village in the local carpenter, undertaker, and general Jack-of-all-trades. Visits to this friend, who reigned over a carpenter's shop and yard which had an indescribable fascination for Tommy, were the joy of his childish heart; and as the village was nearly two miles off, and he was not allowed to go there unescorted, they were a joy not too frequently experienced. It was consequently to his unspeakable delight that his eloquent exposition of the charms of "Mr. Sims" and his dwelling-place received from Gerard Astell a careless:

"All right, Tommy, we'll go and see Mr. Sims!"

It was, perhaps, as well that in the supreme satisfaction with life in general and Gerard in particular thus engendered, Tommy was quite content at first to chatter on excitedly, regardless or oblivious of the fact that his companion did little or nothing to support the conversation. For Gerard was apparently fully occupied with his own thoughts. Grave thoughts they were, and difficult thoughts, to judge from the expression of his face; and by degrees a heavy frown of cogitation appeared on his forehead.

"It's a great wonder, isn't it, Mr. Astell?"

Gerard started and seemed to bring his thoughts back to the present with a vigorous effort, as he glanced down at the alert little face upturned towards him. Tommy had obviously just finished a long speech, and was pausing for a reply. Gerard smiled guiltily.

"I'm awfully sorry, old chap!" he said. "But I'm afraid I wasn't listening."

Tommy looked at him, his head on one side, with a meditative expression which would have been condemnation but for a saving recollection of their destination.

"You haven't been listening much, have you?" he said. "I've told you lots! I've told you about my guinea-pig, and

about Polly and the other cows, and all about Richards and all his family—that's the new coachman, and I don't believe you even heard that! Are you thinking about whether Mr. Sims will be glad to see us? He will, I 'sare you!"

"I've no doubt about it!" returned Gerard gravely. "And what was the last thing you told me, old chap—the great wonder, you know?"

He spoke with the interest necessary for the restoration of perfect harmony, and Tommy immediately plunged into confidence again.

"It was about the clock on Arsdale Church!" he said eagerly. "You know, Mr. Astell! You can see it from the road. Mr. Sims has got it in his shop; he's cleaning it; he can clean everything! At least, he had it a little while ago, and I do hope it hasn't gone yet! Now would you have b'lieved it? The across of that clock—the face, you know—is longer than me."

"Is it really?" said Gerard, with due amazement, and then evidently feeling it incumbent on him to pursue the conversation, he continued: "Does Mr. Sims often have clocks to clean?"

Tommy shook his head regretfully.

"Not very often!" he said. "He says people let their church clocks go to wrack and ruin. That's dreadful, isn't it? He says so long as they go at all, they don't care! He ought by rights to have had Arsdale clock months ago, he says—only I'm so glad he didn't, 'cos then you and me couldn't have seen it, and now we shall, I hope. Just fancy, it's been striking wrong ever since September!"

"How dreadful!" agreed Gerard, with much solemnity.

"Isn't it?" returned Tommy, with a little skip.

He felt that conversation was actually under weigh, and he warmed accordingly to his subject. "Mustn't it have been a dreadful inconvenience, Mr. Astell? You see, when it was really six, for instance, it struck four; and when it was two it struck twelve."

"Arsdale Church clock!"

The words came from Gerard with an odd vibration about them, and he stopped suddenly and stood looking down at the child with such a strange flash of expression on his face that Tommy gazed up at him in half-resentful surprise.

"I thought you really were attending, now," he said severely. "I've been telling

you about Arsdale clock all the time, and you pretended it was very interesting."

"It is, old man, it is," Gerard spoke hastily, almost incoherently, and he finished with a slight, hoarse laugh. "Arsdale Church clock strikes twelve when the time is really two?" The words were uttered slowly, as though he were trying to arrange in his mind some significance which they might possess. "And it's been like this since—since when, Tommy?"

"Since September," returned Tommy, half reluctantly.

"But since when in September? Do you know? Was it before—"

With all a child's shrinking shyness and reserve where anything mysterious or terrible is concerned, Tommy had never been known, since first he had been made to understand that his cousin Basil had "gone away," to make the most distant allusion to that unexplained departure. He understood now instantly what landmark Gerard was about to set before him, and he forestalled the words quickly. He nodded his head rapidly.

"Yes!" he said in a hurried, reluctant whisper. "It began that day—you know—when there was a party. I heard Mr. Sims tell Martin. He said it was a coincidence."

Without another word, his face set and stern, and his eyes fixed as though he found himself face to face with a mental problem which, in its entirety, his brain could not yet even state, Gerard turned and began to stride along the road to the village at a pace which told that his little companion was forgotten. He pulled up in a few minutes, apologised, and continued at a more reasonable pace. But a cloud of preoccupation still enveloped him, and Tommy felt that the whole expedition was, in some mysterious and inexplicable manner, overshadowed.

Even the fascination of Mr. Sims's shop did not restore the lost tone. Tommy was vaguely oppressed and aware of the futility of all earthly anticipation as he found himself only slightly thrilled even by the fact that the clock was still to be inspected. Gerard's remarks during the visit were only such as courtesy demanded of him. He stood, for the most part, leaning against the carpenter's bench, his eyes fixed on the great clock-face as it leant against the opposite wall. Only when he turned to leave the place he seemed to rouse himself. He pointed with his stick to the clock.

"Strike gone wrong?" he said briefly to Mr. Sims.

That authority smiled condescendingly.

"The whole thing gone wrong, as you may say, sir. Neglect, and nothing else! That clock, Mr. Astell, has been striking two hours behind the correct time throughout the winter, sir, and it's only just come into my hands."

"When did it go wrong first? You can't remember, I suppose?"

Mr. Sims hesitated.

"Well, sir," he said, "I do happen to know, because it's a day as we shan't none of us forget in a hurry, and it's been dated from the first, so to speak. The first day as it was noticed that that there strike was wrong was the twentieth of September last—the day of the great party at Arsdale House!"

#### CHAPTER XIV. BROTHER AND SISTER.

"WHY, you're never thinking of going yet, surely? It's not half-past nine!"

"I know! It is rather early, Mrs. Cormack; but I think if you'll forgive me—I don't feel quite fit, you know. The journey, or—or something!"

Gerard's words—as had been his manner throughout the evening which had passed since his reappearance at the Hall with Tommy—were a somewhat confused and heavy reproduction of his usual demeanour. The evening had been dull, a fact to which a vague flatness and disappointment in Mrs. Cormack's voice witnessed; and Gerard's rather incoherent explanation of himself, as he rose to take leave at an unusually early hour, seemed by no means uncalled-for.

The faint shadow of questioning anxiety which had been gathering on Brenda's face grew more pronounced as he spoke, and her eyes were distressed and wistful as he turned to her to say "good night." He did not answer their questioning by look or sign, shaking hands hurriedly and confusedly, and rather avoiding her eyes as he answered Mrs. Cormack's loquacious regrets and hopes that a night's rest might "quite set him up," and making his leave-taking in every way as brief as possible.

Once outside the Hall, however, he showed no further desire for the night's rest to which Mrs. Cormack had referred. As the front door closed behind him a quick sigh of relief escaped him, and he pushed back his hat with a gesture which seemed the physical outcome of a mental oppression; his face settled into an expression which

it had worn more than once for an instant or two at a time during the evening—an expression of intent and bewildered cogitation—and he set out slowly towards the Cottage, walking like a man lost in thought.

More than once during the course of the walk those slow steps came altogether to a standstill, evidently with no consciousness of the fact on Gerard's part, and he stood motionless in the road staring straight before him, his brows contracted, his lips working slightly as though he were stating and restating a problem not to be solved by any effort which he could bring to bear upon it. By the time he finally reached the garden gate of the Cottage he was very pale, and his eyes were harassed and disturbed.

He walked up the garden and entered the house, and as he crossed the hall a servant met him with a yellow paper in her hand.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "but this telegram came from Miss Astell about two hours ago."

She handed him the paper. He glanced down at it and read the following words :

"Expect me by 11.50 to-night at Helston. Send James with pony-cart. Do not sit up."

As Gerard's eyes fell upon the first words a dull colour rushed over his face. He looked up hastily, and then looked down again at the telegram. He did not speak, and after waiting a moment the woman continued :

"We've made everything ready, sir, and I am just going to lay supper for my mistress in the dining-room. Shall I shut up the house, or will you be sitting up?"

"No—yes—I don't know! You can shut up the house, any way."

Gerard spoke almost incoherently, and, handing the paper back mechanically to the woman, to whom it was addressed, went quickly down the passage to a little room at the back of the house in which he sometimes smoked. He shut the door after him with a violence which was obviously as unconscious as it was unusual in him, and flinging himself into a chair, stared up at the ceiling as he had stared into the darkness during his walk home, with every perturbed, perplexed, and harassed line in his face accentuated a hundred-fold. By-and-by he rose with a restless movement of unendurable agitation, and taking out a cigar, began to pace up and down the room as he lighted it. But it

was hardly well alight before he threw it nervously away, and continued to pace up and down, stopping now and then, absorbed and feverish, to finger any object that presented itself to his hand, or gazing down fixedly at the floor. There were sounds about the house—sounds of the servants' preparations in the dining-room, of the shutting up of the house, of the servants going to their rooms. There were sounds from without as the pony-cart departed to meet the expected mistress. Then there was perfect quiet. Still Gerard Astell, alone in that little room, never ceased to move restlessly to and fro.

At last there came another sound—wheels upon the road, and the quick trot of the pony as it drew near its stables. And as he heard it, Gerard stopped abruptly with the face of a man who finds suddenly upon him a position for which he is not prepared, in spite of hours of mental activity; of a man, apparently, who finds himself caught as he had hardly intended, for he turned out the gas with a swift, half-involuntary movement, and went across the hall towards the stairs. But if he had proposed to reach his room unseen, he was too late. He was not half-way down the hall when there was the click of a key in the latch. The door was pushed open, and his sister's voice called to her groom :

"All right, James! Good night!"

An instant later Miss Astell had crossed the threshold.

She saw her brother at once—they were, indeed, face to face—and stopped short; stopped with a suddenness which seemed to leave her figure, tall and dark in its travelling wraps, curiously braced and instinct with intense life. She wore no veil, and across her face, which showed almost dead white in the gaslight, there flashed an indescribable expression, which left it hard and set as a mask. Gerard, also, had stopped abruptly, a dull flush on his face; and for an instant the brother and sister, as though touched by a common impulse, confronted one another in a strange silence.

Miss Astell was the first to move and to break the silence. There was a fitful gleaming light in her eyes, which, in its suggestion of something behind, accentuated that likeness to a mask about the cold rigidity of her features, as she came down the hall and said, in a tone of chill composure which, like her face, seemed to conceal or control something :

"You are still up, then?"

She went through no form of greeting. Her acceptance of the position was as matter-of-fact as though it had been the very object of her journey. But her composure seemed rather to intensify the unusual air of embarrassment which hung about Gerard, and his answer was hurried and incoherent.

"I—yes—that is—I was just going up! You—I hardly expected you so soon! How are you, Magdalen?"

As though the singularity of his manner had caught her attention, Miss Astell's eyes were intently observant of him for an instant. Then she said deliberately:

"I'm quite well, thank you! You didn't intend to sit up for me, then? And yet it is not late—for you! At any rate, you'll keep me company while I have something to eat? I suppose there is something to eat?"

She passed on into the dining-room, and Gerard followed her perforce; followed her slowly and reluctantly, his eyes, in which the perplexity had deepened, fixed upon the graceful figure before him.

Miss Astell hardly seemed hungry, in spite of her expressed desire for food. She prepared to take supper with some circumstance, exacting incessant service in the matters of laying aside her wraps, of carving for her, and so forth, from her brother; services which Gerard rendered with a manner singularly unlike his usual daring insouciance with his sister—a manner which was tentative and almost propitiatory. But when she was finally supplied with every possible accessory to a meal, and Gerard had subsided into an arm-chair at the other end of the table, Miss Astell merely played with her knife and fork and talked; talked with an even, unceasing flow of language about which there was a touch of keen excitement, in spite of its surface composure; as there was an always growing excitement in the burning eyes which never left her brother's face or figure.

Nor was she content to absorb the conversation. Released from active service, a certain absence of mind had fallen upon Gerard in which he would evidently have sat absorbed, hardly hearing the words addressed to him. But this his sister would by no means allow. Again and again she paused, forcing upon him the sense of her words—always of a trivial and even irrelevant nature—and dragging an answer from him whether he would or

no. Perhaps it was as a consequence of this ruthless straining of his mental faculties that Gerard by-and-by grew restless. His face flushed and paled in rapid alternation, and his answers became always more vague and incoherent. That his brain was working on lines of its own, and that he was hardly conscious of what his sister said, even when he answered her, was a fact declared at last by his breaking suddenly and directly into her speech.

"Magdalen, look here," he said. He had leaned impetuously forward across the table, and was looking straight at his sister with a certain strange courageousness in his brown eyes; and he spoke in a low, jerking tone. "I'm going to make a clean breast to you, and I take it you'll do the same for me, and we shall get this thing cleared up. I'd better begin from the beginning, it seems to me. I was in an awfully bad way last summer and autumn—debts, debts of honour—you know the kind of thing; and things seemed to be working up for the worst kind of smash. I'd done all I knew in the money-raising way, tried every single chance, and last September it came to this—six hundred pounds or smash. Cormack;" he paused a moment, and let his eyes rest on the table as he opened and shut his hand uneasily; "well, I'd asked Cormack to give me a hand in June; that day you came in from the Hall and found me, I had come down to see him about it; you remember, perhaps? And he, well, poor chap, he wasn't like himself, was confoundedly unpleasant, in short—and we had words. I was at the very end of my tether, but I couldn't see myself asking him again; and I played every other card in my hand until the last moment. Then, I couldn't go under! It was September then; I was at Hickthorpe, staying with a fellow for the Leger; and I started off one evening—almost in spite of myself, don't you know—to walk over to Arsdale and see Cormack. I wasn't in a state of mind to remember anything in the world except the mess I was in, or I shouldn't have chosen that particular evening. When I came up the hill to the house, it was all lighted up, and there were carriages about and streaming up and down the drive. Look here, Magdalen, it was the night of the dance, don't you know!"

The instant he began to speak, with the words she had been uttering arrested on her very lips, all the excitement of his sister's demeanour, hitherto apparent in

her restless speech, seemed to culminate and concentrate itself in an abnormal stillness. Throughout the long story, hurried out with a shamefaced straightforwardness which never altered, she sat gazing at her brother, her beautiful features sharp with a watchfulness which seemed to develope with every breath into an intent expectancy, which deepened again in her gleaming eyes into what looked like a strange suggestion of triumph. He paused, but she did not speak, nor did her expression change at all. She sat perfectly motionless, with her eyes fastened on his face.

Gerard moved uneasily. He went on with his eyes fixed on the table-cloth.

"Perhaps I ought to have spoken of this before," he said. He spoke now nervously and hesitatingly. "It didn't seem necessary—you'll see that directly, and it wasn't the kind of errand a man wants to brag about! I was more or less off my head with desperation, and having got there I wasn't to be choked off. I made up my mind—or it got made up for me, for I was like a man walking in his sleep—to wait about till the people were gone, and take my chance with Cormack afterwards. Good Lord, how long the time seemed!" He broke off suddenly, and beat the table absently with his hand. Then something seemed to recall him to the present, and he went on in another tone, businesslike and constrained. "I walked about the roads for some time. Then I was getting dog-tired—it's a fairly long pull from Hickthorpe to Arsdale—and impatient. So I came up nearer to the house, and tried to pass the time by looking at the people in the gardens and on the terraces. I was leaning up against one of the palings, noticing all kinds of things as a man will when he's on the rack, when I saw Cormack come out on the library terrace with Miss Stansfield." He paused again, staring straight at the table. "Of course I—well, it was easy to put the palings in my line of sight!" he resumed abruptly, and a little hoarsely. "And then having nothing else to do, I thought things over a bit. When I looked round at the house again—I don't know how long after—the terrace was empty. I was just turning to go away when I saw Cormack come out on to it again, and, Magdalen, you came out after him!"

He stopped and looked up suddenly full into Miss Astell's eyes, his own almost painfully questioning and deprecating.

Miss Astell's lips were a thin line, and her nostrils quivered slightly against the intense stillness of every other muscle. She did not speak. Only she slowly stretched out one hand and clenched it round her handkerchief as it lay beside her on the table.

A startled, dubious expression flashed across Gerard's face, and he drew back, still looking at his sister, as though to see her better. His voice as he spoke again was altered. There was a tone in it as though something hitherto wholly vague and incredible were awakening into definite, insistent life.

"I never thought of this again," he said, "after I heard the details of Cormack's disappearance, for this reason. As I turned away, I heard Arsdale Church clock strike twelve. One of the points of the evidence consisted of Miss Stansfield's statement that she saw him last at a quarter to two. Consequently I thought vaguely that his movements were known for an hour and three-quarters after I saw him. It is only to-day that—that I have reason to think differently." With a sudden movement which was unconsciously young and impulsive, and extraordinarily at variance with his usual manner with his sister, he leaned forward again over the table, carefully avoiding looking at her this time, however. "Magdalen," he said, "Arsdale Church clock was wrong by two hours that night, and what I took for twelve was two o'clock. If that is so, you were with Cormack after the hour which is given as the last time he was ever seen. Why have you never said so?"

There was a strange gasp, and Miss Astell sank slowly back in her chair, her fingers tearing with a slow movement at her handkerchief, her eyes still fixed on her brother, her face working with such a wild confusion of passion that it was little wonder that it was almost livid, or that her breath came heavily and laboriously. Gerard looked at her for an instant, his own face paling to the lips, and then, almost as though in self-defence, he rushed into speech; low, breathless, appealing speech.

"If it's a horrible blunder of some sort, Magda, forgive me!" he said. "I can't understand it. I don't believe it. And I'm a brute to have rushed all this story on you, perhaps, when the whole thing may all be some tremendous mistake! But it's been hammering at me until I'm half silly! I can't forget how you disliked him! Is it possible—is it possible—mind, I

only ask you, Magdalen—that you have held back a clue because of that? Is it possible that there is something you know? If so, for the sake of those whom the suspense is torturing, tell it, in Heaven's name!"

"You villain! You pitiful villain!"

Miss Astell had risen to her feet, tall and erect, quivering and vibrating in every nerve with a passion that seemed literally to possess her. Contempt, hatred, loathing, all blended into a fearful triumph, touched her face into a ghastly beauty which it had never known before. Gerard shrank back, his lips parted, his own eyes dilated. She was quite still, even now; her voice was not raised. And that dreadful quiet seemed to accentuate indescribably the whirlwind of feeling with which it quivered.

"You are too late!" she said. "Too late by many weeks! What have you heard, you scoundrel, to make it worth your while to play this wretched farce? Disliked him? Yes, perhaps, as far as you can know!" There was a weird ring in her voice as she spoke the words. "But there was something before that; something that you could not count upon; something that you did not know. There was a time when Basil Cormack and I were to have been man and wife. That time passed. I—disliked him! But the memory of it remained to me!" She paused, battling for breath; and in that moment, evincing itself in some weird way through her invincible stillness and quiet, her inward passion seemed to gain upon her, and her eyes blazed wildly. "I am of rather stronger stuff, perhaps, than my successor," she continued, "and I was not content to bewail the mystery of Basil Cormack's fate. I vowed to penetrate it. It was a little thing that put a clue into my mind—only a moment's loss of self-control. You are a good actor! Once on the track, light came to me from every side, until the whole thing flashed into distinctness with that man's discovery in Arsdale Spinney." She paused and laughed a low, harsh laugh. "The detectives failed!" she said. "They found a mystery and they left a mystery. But I succeeded! Where did you lose your dog?"

As though the question which Miss Astell flung at him with a triumph of which the insolence alone told that she had passed beyond her own control, had broken into the ghastly bewilderment with

which his face was blank and drawn, Gerard stumbled blindly to his feet.

"Magdalen!" he said hoarsely, almost stupidly. "Good Heavens, Magdalen!"

She contemplated him for a moment, and then she laughed again.

"It was a marvellous piece of carelessness!" she said. "Is it through a special dispensation that creatures like you so often make mistakes like that? Did it never occur to you that your dog's body might be found?"

"What do you mean?"

Apparently the fierce, groping confusion of his tone, the ashen incomprehension of his face, added something to the fire of her passion. She paused a moment, and then suddenly drew a step nearer as she hurled her next words into his very face in a tense, vibrating tone.

"I found your dog's bones in Arsdale Spinney. I found them with its collar—evidence conclusive of their identity. You yourself had roused my suspicions before there was any talk of murder in the matter, and finding proof of your presence where you had concealed it, I knew—I knew that I was on the track at last! I took my witness to a private enquiry office in London, not to the man you fooled at Scotland Yard; and we have tracked you down! All that you have chosen to tell me to-night, so much too late, as to your presence at Arsdale, and its cause, I have known for weeks. And I know more! I know as though I had seen it the sequel which you have not told. I know that you met Basil Cormack when I left him in the garden; that you demanded help of him, and that he refused, and that you murdered him! What horrible traces of your deed clung to your dog, and made it necessary that you should put it so hastily and, thank Heaven, so clumsily out of the way, I can well guess."

She stopped, shuddering so convulsively that she stretched out one hand and stood clinging to a chair for support. And in the sudden silence Gerard, his face, his very lips, a dreadful grey, with every sort of expression but paralysing horror gone alike from every feature and from his dilated eyes, faced her without word or movement; faced her like a figure carved out of rock; until she began again to speak in short, uneven sentences, which seemed to be less addressed to him than an unconscious relief to her own self.



"It is over at last!" she said. "I have waited—ah, how long I have waited!—while they piled it up, a witness here, a bit of evidence there. The last witness has been unearthed at last, and to-morrow, or at latest on the next day, you will be arrested for the murder of Basil Cormack!"

Her voice rose at last as she said the last words into a low cry, and before that cry had died away it was taken up and carried away by another as Gerard, his stupor broken up suddenly into a very frenzy of horror, broke into rapid, incoherent speech.

"Magdalen," he cried, "Magdalen, for Heaven's sake! You don't believe this hideous thing! It isn't possible! Evidence! Witnesses! Great Heaven! What evidence can there be against an innocent man? Magdalen, if there is more in your concealment of your meeting with Cormack on that cursed evening than I can bear to think; if, as you seem to suggest, there were old scores between you of which I never dreamed; if—if you have anything to fear from the truth—don't take this way of concealing it! For your own sake as much as for mine, think what you're doing! Don't tell me the truth." He drew back suddenly, great drops of moisture standing on his forehead. "All the enquiries are closed. I swear to you that they shall never be reopened. You and I need never see each other again, and some day, perhaps, I can forget——"

He was interrupted. For the third time that night Miss Astell laughed—a terrible, derisive laugh.

"An actor!" she said. "I told you so! An excellent actor!"

Only those few words, but they fell upon Gerard's passionate speech as water falls upon fire. A long hissing breath parted his grey lips; the vivid life died out of his face, the energy with which he was quivering faded away, and he stood before his sister cold, trembling, stupefied. Twice he moistened his dry lips to speak, and twice her eyes seemed to freeze the words upon them. Then he said heavily, falteringly:

"You don't know what you're saying, Magdalen. You don't mean it!"

"I mean to hang you!" she returned slowly. "Hope nothing from such a miserable expedient as the shifting of suspicion on to me! That hope will fail you. All hopes will fail you. And do not think of escape. I have told you what I had intended to keep from you until the moment of your

arrest. A mistake, of course! But do not hope to profit by it. You might more easily escape from the condemned cell than escape from me!"

She stood before him for another moment, looking down on him as he sank blindly into a chair, still and relentless, all the excitement gone at last from her tone and manner, borne down, as it seemed, by the irresistible force of an indomitable resolution. Then she turned and passed out of the room, leaving her brother fallen forward with his head upon his arms as they lay across the table.

#### CHAPTER XV. THE LAST WITNESS.

THE afternoon shadows were beginning to grow long. Across the smooth green lawn which lay behind the Cottage, the reflections of the tall poplars, which backed the garden wall so quaintly, were creeping slowly on in long, level lines; creeping to the very feet of Miss Astell as she sat still and unoccupied in a basket-chair; creeping again beyond her to where Gerard was pacing heavily up and down on the grass. Neither brother nor sister ever glanced at the other. The one sat, the other moved to and fro, in an absolute isolation, in which each was, nevertheless, intensely conscious of the other's presence; and the effect thus subtly produced was indescribably chill and terrible.

Throughout the long hours that had passed since Gerard had emerged from the stupor into which he had passed on the previous night, he had not been for one instant released from the consciousness of his sister's presence. Stumbling upstairs to his room in the light of early morning, he had been made aware, by a slight movement as he passed, that behind her half-opened door Miss Astell was awake and watchful. He had realised vaguely that she had watched throughout the night. Through the three hours that immediately ensued, as a sort of under-current of nervous torture, he had listened mechanically for the shutting of that door, for that slight assurance of some measure of freedom, and he had listened in vain. At nine o'clock had come a message—and concealed within the message a threat—to the effect that breakfast was waiting. He had gone downstairs, moving like a man in a dream, with a dazed blankness in his sunken eyes, into the actual presence of which even unseen he had been so painfully conscious. Not one word of any sort or

kind had passed between the brother and sister during breakfast, and after breakfast Gerard, standing irresolute and stupefied, had realised that Miss Astell was pausing also, and that her movements waited upon his. He turned away and went into the smoking-room. Quietly, composedly, and as inevitably as though she had been his shadow Miss Astell followed him, and sat down at a little writing-table near the door.

As though the spell of silence had grown heavier as it was yielded to, they had sat there in a dual solitude more terrible than any loneliness, without a word. As the morning wore on there came gradually over Gerard's face a certain change. The blank stupefaction of suffering began to yield to something more active; his expression became that of a man who struggles to think, who is intensely conscious of the pressing necessity for thought, for calculation, for self-control. But such concentrated, methodical mental effort was as obviously impossible to him. Rising against it, confusing it, and beating it down, was his relentless consciousness of that still figure towards which his eyes would wander when they had become most intent; penetrating his every effort was a creeping sense that the watchfulness of that figure was not concentrated wholly on him; that his sister was keenly alive to the slightest sound from without, that she was intensely expectant.

Lunch had been gone through—the form of lunch, that is to say—and then the very intensity of the strain upon Gerard had worked some sort of rebellion against it in him. He had gone out into the garden, his face set into a dogged concentration. His sister had followed him, but he had neither glanced at her nor relaxed a muscle, and for two hours he had walked steadily up and down.

How much force had gone to that determined struggle for thought, how heavily it had taxed his resources, physical and mental, was obvious now from his face. White and set, with sunken, dark-ringed eyes and compressed lips, there was a desperation about its resolution which told of something more nearly akin to nervous exhaustion than to strength. A footstep sounded on the road beyond the house. Miss Astell turned her head instantly and swiftly, listening intently, and Gerard started as though he had been shot, and stopped in his walk, listening too. The footstep died away in the

distance, and great drops of moisture stood on his forehead. He paused a moment, his eyes full of agony, and then he turned and walked quickly up to his sister.

"I am going to the Hall!" he said in a low, hoarse voice.

Without a word she rose and walked beside him. In the same ghastly silence they passed down the garden; in the same ghastly silence they traversed the road which lay between the Cottage and the Hall; in the same ghastly silence they followed Mrs. Cormack's footman down the long passage to the drawing-room.

In contrast to that silence, the outburst of exclamation, reproach, astonishment, and welcome on which the door opened seemed almost deafening, and Miss Astell's perfect composure as she advanced to that lady had something abnormal in it.

"Well, to be sure!" said Mrs. Cormack. "And this is what's kept Gerard away all day! Well, there, my dear, I'm as glad as glad to see you! And we've been that wondering and disappointed all day to think that he never came near us, haven't we, Brenda? And when did you come down, Magdalen, my dear?"

Brenda had made no answer to Mrs. Cormack's appeal for confirmation of her words. She was gazing straight at Gerard's ashen face, her girlish face pale, her eyes wide and pitiful, the vague shadow which had touched her on the previous evening developed into a living fear. And as though answering the mute appeal, Gerard went across the room to her side and spoke in a low, uneven voice, under cover of Mrs. Cormack's vociferous conversation:

"Can you come into the garden?"

She glanced across to where Miss Astell and Mrs. Cormack, with Miss Brown for chorus, were apparently quite absorbed in an account of the unexpected arrival of the former, and then passed quickly out of the long window.

"Oh, Gerard, what is it?" she said. "What is it, my poor boy!"

"Come down to the rose-garden!" he answered hoarsely.

The rose-garden, the making of which had been old Mr. Cormack's joy and pride, lay at the bottom of the garden, sheltered from observation from the house by an intervening group of trees. Passing quickly round these trees and down the winding gravel walks—the fugitive air so strong upon Gerard that it communicated itself to Brenda—and turning under the arched opening that led to their destination, they

stood at the top of a wide lawn, broken into grass walks by beds of rose-trees, which sloped easily down to where a rose-grown palisade separated the garden from the park beyond. The sun had disappeared; there were no shadows thrown by the magnificent trees grouped about the undulating expanse which stretched from the palisade away into distance. The quiet of twilight rested on everything.

"Now, Gerard," said Brenda breathlessly. Her two hands were clinging to his arm, she was looking up into his face with her own quivering with suspense, and she felt him start and thrill convulsively from head to foot. She turned her head instinctively, to follow the direction of his haggard, staring eyes, and then she drew swiftly away from him with a little cry. Standing in the entrance through which they had come, watching them with a strange flash in her eyes, stood Miss Astell.

"Another piece of evidence," she said. "I thought so!"

There was a pause. As though influenced unconsciously by the cold sneer in the other woman's voice, Brenda drew close to Gerard as suddenly as she had drawn away from him, and laid her fingers upon his arm. Gerard's other hand closed on them convulsively, and he stood so, confronting his sister, the courage of desperation gathering slowly on his face. It was he who broke the silence, addressing Miss Astell in a low, grating voice.

"Do you mean to stay?" he said.

"Yes!"

He turned from her with a gesture of defiance which was not without a kind of dignity, and, with a strange, deliberate passion, gathered Brenda, frightened and unresisting, into his arms.

"Brenda," he said, "Brenda, my love, tell me you love me and forgive me for the misery that I can't keep out of your life."

For a moment he held her as though he could never let her go, she clinging to him with a supreme sense of crisis in which even her incomprehension seemed to be lost. Then he released her. He turned her gently, so that she no longer saw Miss Astell, and holding both her hands in his, looked into her face. Brenda was white now to the lips; her eyes were large and dark; but the nervous, uncertain expression of dread which had haunted her face had passed away, leaving it strong and womanly as she looked steadily back into his eyes.

Apparently her sweet courage shook Gerard more than any demonstration of fear might have done. His pale lips twitched nervously; something of the determination of his features faltered, and he broke into sudden speech in a voice so husky as to be almost inaudible.

"Ob, my dearest," he said, "forgive me! What right had such a brute as I am to ask for your love? Why didn't I remember that no man sows a past like mine and reaps a present fit to share with you? Ah, Brenda, Brenda! It's knocked me over and taken out all my fight to think of you! To think what this will be to you! To know that if I'd been another sort of fellow it never could have happened!"

His head had bent lower and lower as he spoke, and he stood before Brenda now, wringing her hands in both of his, a man self-convicted and overwhelmed.

"That is truth!"

Miss Astell had advanced a few paces from her first position in the entrance, and she stood now with an isolation upon her which the few yards separating her from the two so close together could never have created, directly behind Brenda; watching now her brother, now the slender figure that faced him, with a face like marble. The three words came from her slowly and deliberately. As they fell on Brenda's ear a thrill ran through her, seeming to brace her from head to foot. She did not turn her head. The hold of her fingers upon Gerard's trembling hands became stronger and full of reassurance, and her eyes brightened.

"Don't talk like that, Gerard," she said, and there was a full, fearless ring in her low voice. "I love you! I take your past with your present and your future, and whatever comes of either we meet it together!"

A slight, indescribably mocking sound came from Miss Astell, and Brenda, still without any other recognition of her presence, drew a shade nearer to Gerard and tightened her clasp on his hands.

"Tell me," she said. And Gerard obeyed her.

"I must begin with a confession," he said huskily. "Brenda, you know pretty well what a bad lot I've been, but you haven't known in detail. You shouldn't hear it from me now, but—there are ways in which you might find out that would be worse for you." He stopped abruptly.

"Go on!" she said.

"I had been in the habit for a good many years of borrowing a good deal of money from Basil Cormack. He was always awfully good to me—I owed him a lot—until last June. Do you remember my coming down here last June?"

She nodded faintly. As Basil Cormack's name passed his lips a change had come to her face; no shock of surprise, but rather the look of one who finds the actual falling of an anticipated shadow more dreadful in its icy chill than she had been prepared to bear. She had shrunk a little closer to Gerard, and as though that mute token of dependence had touched the stronger fibres in him, his tone and manner grew firmer.

"I came to borrow of him then," he said. "I wanted a large sum. He refused to let me have it, and I quarrelled with him. I had wanted the money desperately, and not getting it I got deeper and deeper involved. I made matters worse trying such ways as were open to me, Brenda, to get on my feet again; and by September it was all but over with me! I was so desperate that I determined as a last chance to make an appeal to Cormack. Brenda, I went over to Arsdale on the night of the twentieth of September to do it!"

With her lips parted as though she had indeed uttered the cry for which her astonishment left her no voice, Brenda drew back with an irrepressible movement as though to see his face better. There was a moment's dead silence—a silence broken only by the tap of Miss Astell's foot as she beat it slowly and regularly on the ground. At last Brenda spoke, her soft voice all confused and hurried.

"You were at Arsdale that night! You, Gerard! Then why—why did you never——"

"Why did I never say so, Brenda?" he cried impetuously. "Because I never knew, I never dreamt that anything I could have said would have thrown any light! I was ashamed of my errand. Ah, sweetheart, can't you tell who made me most ashamed! I couldn't face the talk about it. And there seemed nothing to be gained. If I had known then what I discovered yesterday! But—Heaven help me!—what could I have done then?"

"Go on!"

The words were a mere breathless whisper, and as his eyes rested on the drawn horror of suspense in the pretty,

girlish face, Gerard controlled himself with a great effort.

"Be brave, dearest!" he said, taking her into his arms, as if in spite of himself. "It's like death to tell you this, but you must know it soon! Scamp—you remember Scamp—must have followed me to Arsdale without my knowledge. I walked there from Hickthorpe, where I was staying. The remains of the dog have been found buried in Arsdale Spinney, arguing my presence at Arsdale or near it when I had concealed the fact. My desperate necessities and my determination to ask help of Cormack have also been unearthed, and there is evidence enough to warrant my arrest for Cormack's murder!"

"Gerard! Oh, Gerard, Gerard!"

The cry broke from her sharp and wild, ringing with the very extremity of horror and incredulity.

"You know it's false, Brenda? You know I didn't do it?"

With all the horror frozen on her face, stopped short, as it seemed, in the wild torrent of her dismay, Brenda faced him for a moment motionless and speechless. Then with a little gesture as absolutely simple and quiet as it was absolutely trustful, she held out both her hands to him.

"You should not have said that, Gerard!" she said, and her voice vibrated slightly as with the force of that agonising shock. "I know you! I love you! I know it is impossible!"

He lifted his hands and let his face fall upon them in absolute self-abandonment of gratitude, and at the same moment there came from behind a low, cruel laugh. Miss Astell had drawn a step nearer.

"How beautiful!" she said. "How reassuring!"

But quite suddenly, as though that taunting voice jarring her tightly-strung nerves at that instant, as though such a pressing home of the consciousness of that pitiless intruding presence had stung her past control at last, the girl turned and faced her, her face aglow with passionate indignation. Her flashing eyes seemed to concentrate now in them all the dislike to Miss Astell which, hitherto so scrupulously subdued in Brenda's gentle mind, had sprung in this moment, under these conflicting overwhelming emotions, into contemptuous hate.

"How dare you?" she cried. "How dare you? Why do you force yourself on us like this? Why do you torture him

with your presence? If you believe this hideous lie, leave us, who know that it is a lie, together! Do you believe it?"

"Ask him!"

The two words fell from Miss Astell, cold and slow, as she fixed her eyes full on her brother's face. Brenda followed the direction of those eyes and looked back again at the set woman's face in silence. Then, still gazing with horrified, fascinated eyes at Miss Astell, she stretched out one hand to Gerard.

"Gerard," she said, "who accuses you?"

A difficult gesture from Gerard answered her, and she shrank away from Miss Astell with a long, strangled gasp of unutterable repulsion.

With a gesture of contemptuous disdain, over-accentuated by just a touch, and in that over-accentuation revealing, perhaps, some sense of the unutterable horror she had inspired, Miss Astell turned and walked slowly to the upper end of the rose-garden.

It was some moments before any words came from the two she left. Brenda was leaning against Gerard's shoulder, long, laboured breaths shaking her from head to foot; and he held her, in silent, speechless tenderness. At last her breathing grew quieter; she seemed to rouse herself with a determined effort. Drawing herself away from his supporting arm, she turned to him, pushing the hair from her forehead.

"What does it matter whose doing it is?" she said. "What we must think is, how to prove the truth, Gerard! Tell me—or have you told me?—did you see Basil that night? Did you ask him for the money?"

"No, dear," said Gerard hesitatingly.

"Why not? What made you give it up, when you wanted it so badly? Did you not see him?"

"I saw him—yes. That was what made me give it up!" Then, in answer to her look, he went on hurriedly: "Brenda, don't be angry with me. I didn't mean to—spy. I was hanging about in the grounds, and I saw Cormack come out on the library terrace with—with you, dear! Oh, forgive me, dearest!" as she drew away from him with a sudden agonising blush. "I wasn't there an instant. I dropped down behind the hedge! Brenda, it was that that did it! I couldn't borrow money, after that, of the man you were going to marry, for I knew that I wanted you myself!"

She had covered her burning face with her hands, and for a moment she did not speak. Then she looked up at him with a sweet, tremulous little smile.

"And did you go straight away?" she said.

"Pretty nearly," he answered hesitatingly. "I don't know exactly what became of me that night. It meant ruin to me, you know; and I only remember walking about for endless hours!"

"But ruin didn't come, Gerard," she said quickly. "How was that? Can't you prove that you got the money some other way? Won't that clear you?"

"It may help me, Brenda! But, sweetheart, I shall have to prove that I got the money out of a private gambling-club! That was the beginning of the worst of all you've cut me loose from."

"Have you nearly finished?" It was Miss Astell's voice, the coldness and composure gone from it, vibrating with an intense excitement and triumph; and as they heard it they turned with a common violent start towards her. "Let me suggest that you make haste, Miss Stansfield, for I think these gentlemen have business with your lover." She moved slightly as she finished, pointing to the entrance from the larger garden. Standing just inside, and completely blocking it up, were two policemen; and another man in plain clothes was coming across the grass to Gerard. He drew nearer and nearer in silence. Brenda, white as death, had shrunk a little nearer to Gerard, who held her hand in his, almost unconsciously, as it seemed, and waited quietly.

"Mr. Gerard Astell!" said the newcomer tersely.

"Yes!"

"I have a warrant for your arrest, Mr. Gerard Astell, on a charge of murder—the murder of Mr. Basil Cormack, late of Aradale Manor, Yorkshire."

"I should like to see the warrant."

The request was made with perfect courtesy, and it was no less courteously complied with. Gerard inspected the document, and handed it back to the officer, saying quietly:

"I am quite ready. You won't need those!" pointing as he spoke to the handcuffs which the other man carried.

"I beg your pardon, sir! A charge of murder, you know."

A dark, burning colour rushed over Gerard's forehead. He glanced at Brenda, and then quietly held out his wrists.

And as the snap of the cold steel was heard, a long breath of unutterable triumph parted Miss Astell's lips, and she turned away towards the palings which divided the rose-garden from the park.

The park was private. Consequently the figure of a tramp among the trees in the distance was distinctly unusual. But it seemed a trifle to arrest Miss Astell's attention at such a moment. Something did arrest her attention, though, little as any one observed the fact. And it was on that distant figure that her eyes were fixed. There was an indescribable wild stare in them which seemed to sharpen and alter her whole face, as she moved suddenly and almost stumblingly down the slope until she stood close against the palings. As she moved the man moved too, and came slowly and undecidedly towards the rose-garden.

"I should like one word with this lady," said Gerard to the police-officer, indicating Brenda by a movement of his head. "There's no objection?"

"Not so as we stay here, and you're quick, sir!"

He withdrew a pace or two as he spoke, and Gerard turned with a piteous movement of his fettered hands to Brenda. But before he could say a word, she had broken into eager speech, clasping his hands passionately in hers.

"Gerard, tell me—tell me quick! You spoke of something you found out yesterday! That was not this! It was something else you know about that night, and it may help to clear you! Who did you see? What did you see? Do you know anything of what happened to Basil after he left me?"

"Yes!" he whispered hoarsely. "Don't ask me, Brenda!"

"I must ask you. I do ask you. Who did you see with him—what do you know?"

The ragged man in the park had stopped and was loitering in a lazy, careless fashion, still in the distance. Miss Astell, pressed against the palings, was gripping them with both hands, her eyes fixed and almost starting, her face livid.

"I can't tell you, Brenda. I must think. Say good-bye to me, sweetheart. I must go!"

"Who——"

A wild shriek! Another, and another, and another, ringing out in terrible succession on the evening air! And they all turned aghast in the direction from

which they came, to see Miss Astell beating at the palings, tearing at them as though she would tear them down, as the ragged man on the other side drew nearer and nearer, approaching the palings in a rapid, uneven run.

"Basil! Basil! My love—my love! Not dead—not dead! Come back to me at last! Basil!"

The ragged man—ragged and wild in appearance beyond description—stopped suddenly three feet from the palings, and broke into a weird, crazy laugh.

"Basil!" he cried in a shrill voice. "No! No! not Basil! Basil Cormack bored me, and I killed him! What's the use of being always alone with yourself if you can't kill yourself without any one being the wiser? I killed Basil Cormack a hundred years ago, and I'm my own master now! Hurrah! I've never told any one but you, Magdalen! Never any one but you!"

Haggard, emaciated, with lank white hair, and wild, shifting eyes, the face was the face of Basil Cormack; high-pitched, uneven, crazy, the voice was the voice of Basil Cormack still! They were the face and the voice of a raving madman, and as he broke suddenly into a delirious shriek of laughter, Miss Astell fell like a dead woman against the paling which rose up between herself and him.

#### CHAPTER XVI. DUAL SOLITUDE.

IT was all over! The impenetrable darkness and mystery; the bewildering clues; the terrible suspicion which had gathered round the fate of Basil Cormack were dissipated once and for ever, by such a pitiless light as was scarcely less terrible than the darkness itself. Of the days that followed the hour when the mindless body of Basil Cormack was brought back to his mother's house, no one who passed through them ever spoke.

The opinion of the specialists telegraphed for by Gerard, was given after the lengthened investigation inseparable from what the senior doctor alluded to as "one of the most interesting cases" he had ever met. It hardly needed the innumerable questions as to Basil Cormack's character previous to his disappearance, to evoke in all who had known him best a sense, the horror of which is not to be described, that all those peculiarities which they had looked upon as merely personal eccentricities had arisen in latent mania; a mania which

some strong excitement, according to the doctors, had developed instantaneously in an acute form. The raving insanity which followed on his return to Whorlbeck they looked upon as an equally sudden development, resulting from the effect, on his disordered brain, of familiar scenes and faces. Originally he had probably been the victim simply of a desire to get rid of his own identity; the cunning with which he had arranged his flight, and absolutely concealed himself and all his movements for eight months, pointed to the fact that he must have been abnormally clear-headed on all other points. As the disease grew on him his life had doubtless become rougher, while his capabilities and his self-control diminished. The hallucination as to his own murder he had evidently concealed with a madman's cunning, until the excitement of recognition had given the final jar to his brain. And details in the course of their examination created in the doctors an impression that he had probably actually killed and buried some one or something; an impression which threw a ghastly significance on the remains of poor Scamp.

Of the future the doctors would say little or nothing. They were of opinion that the period of frenzy would pass, but as to what would follow they were vague. It might leave the patient imbecile; it might leave him a dangerous lunatic; it might leave him, always excepting the hallucination from which he could never recover, comparatively sane. In any case, in their opinion—conveyed to Mrs. Cormack in the most sympathetic phrases—an asylum was the only place in which he could end his days.

But Basil Cormack never went to a lunatic asylum.

What passed between Miss Astell and Mrs. Cormack during the long hour they passed together after the doctors' verdict was pronounced, no one knew. Even Brenda, who found Mrs. Cormack after it with her florid face very pale, never heard more than was conveyed in her first awestruck words:

"She's going to take care of him, Brenda. She—she loves him so terribly. She says it was her fault. She saw him alone that night, and something happened—I don't understand. But, Brenda—stoop down—I believe she's pleased!"

The master of Arsdale House went back to his house, and two strong, taciturn men went with him. The mistress of Whorlbeck Cottage left it, and went to live in a little house close to the gates of Arsdale Park. Never a sun set that had not seen her cross the threshold of a suite of rooms in Arsdale House, where no one but herself and the two taciturn men ever went. For many months those visits barely occupied five minutes daily. Then there came a change. The inmate of those rooms no longer raved. He began to watch for his solitary visitor, so his attendants said, and to relapse into depression when she departed. The minutes became hours. Gradually and very slowly, with the passage not of months but of years, the change went on. The inmate of those rooms became a courteous gentleman, harmless, indifferent to most things—except the mention of the name of Basil Cormack, which was always dangerously exciting to him—but always quiet and contented in the presence of the beautiful grey-haired woman who came to him now in the morning, and only left him at night.

Miss Astell's name was never mentioned by any one of her friends except in a horrified whisper. Even Mrs. Cormack never alluded to her without tears, which contained quite as much of reprobation as of pity. In one house alone she was spoken of always with the tenderness which only comprehension could create.

It was a good house in which to be enshrined—the unpretentious little house in London where Gerard and Brenda lived. There were little children there as time went on, and there was that most perfect love and trust which comes of difficulties conquered and hardships faced in mutual dependence. Twice every year Gerard went to Yorkshire, and twice every year on his return the quiet colloquy between the husband and wife ended in a long, long silence.

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## HOME NOTES

AND  
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**WINTER CLOTHING.**—Under the title "Clothing as a Protection against Cold," Dr. Robson Roose contributes a seasonable article to the "Fortnightly Review" in regard to the action of various materials of dress in preserving the body from undue loss of heat by radiation, conduction, and evaporation. The principal conclusions arrived at are thus briefly stated: (1) As a protection against cold, woollen garments of equal thicknesses are much superior to either linen or cotton, and should always be worn for underclothing. Furs and leather are serviceable against great cold, and especially against severe wind. Waterproof clothing should be reserved for very wet weather, and generally for persons who are not taking exercise when exposed to it. (2) The value of several layers of clothing as compared with a single warm garment should be borne in mind. An extra layer even of thin material next the skin is often very valuable. (3) As a protector against cold, a garment should not fit closely to the body, but should be comparatively loose and easy, so that a layer of air is interposed between it and the skin. A loosely-woven material is warmer than one of an opposite character. (4) For wearing at night, woollen clothing is not generally desirable; cotton or linen is far better. The blankets constitute the woollen covering, and ought to protect the body sufficiently. (5) Lastly, it must always be remembered that the source of heat is within the body itself, and not in the clothes. Proper food coupled with a due amount of exercise will produce warmth; the function of clothing is to retain the heat thus generated.

**A DIRTY WALL-PAPER** is always very untidy and nasty besides being unwholesome. As you cannot afford the expense of a new paper, I should follow this recipe, which a correspondent tells me is a never-failing remedy, easy to manage, and will not injure the most delicate paper. Mix four pounds of common wheat flour with two pints of cold water. Knead this into a stiff dough and form it into two or three balls. Wipe the paper all over with it, and, as the dough becomes dirty, work the soiled parts into the middle and the clean parts outside. This quantity will be found sufficient to clean a very large room. Begin at the top of the paper and work downwards till all is cleansed.

**TO CLEAN LACQUERED BRASS.**—Lay the brass in hot soda-water, and brush it well over with crystal soap. Lift it up, and lay it as it is in a pan and pour clear boiling water on it. Let it remain for a few moments, and then pour cold water on it; dry carefully. Then polish well with powder or either of the crystal soaps. When the article is small enough to enable one to boil in a saucepan of soda-water, it will be found to clean quickly and thoroughly.

**COCOA MOULD** is a most nourishing dish, and, if carefully prepared, so as to be smooth, it is very good. First mix carefully and crush out all lumps, three tablespoonfuls of cornflour, one tablespoonful of cocoa essence, and two tablespoonfuls of sugar. Mix the dry ingredients gradually into one quart of milk, place in a china-lined saucepan, and boil for fifteen minutes. Stir it all the time, in the middle as well as round the edge, whilst boiling, or it will burn. Directly the mixture begins to thicken, take it quickly off the fire and beat it up thoroughly, then let it simmer only.

**A SPICE DRIPPING CAKE** appears to be in great demand just now, so I will give mine here for the benefit of all my readers. Take one pound of well-dried flour, add to it a small spoonful of salt, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and a very small half teaspoonful of ground ginger. Rub six ounces of good dripping into the flour and four ounces of sugar. Beat up one or two eggs with sour or butter milk, add half a teaspoonful of good mixed spice. Work the whole into a nice light dough, and beat with a wooden spoon for five or seven minutes. Bake in a moderate oven for an hour to an hour and a half.

**DIRECTIONS ON ROASTING JOINTS.**—1. First see that a good clear fire is burning, and sweep up all ashes so that there will be no need to make a dust while the meat is before the fire. 2. Allow a quarter of an hour to each pound of meat, and an extra half-hour to every eight pounds. It is necessary to cook close white meats, such as pork and veal, rather longer. 3. First place the meat close to the fire for about seven minutes, then draw it further away. The object of the fast cooking to start with is to close up the pores of the meat and keep the gravy in. 4. To roast well, meat must be constantly basted, and be well watched that it does not burn. 5. Turn the joint from time to time so that it is equally done all over.



## ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BODILY EXERCISE** in maintaining good health is not properly realised in the present day. Besides strengthening the limbs, there is no doubt that bodily exercise has a great influence on respiration, the circulation of the blood, and consequently acts on the whole body. There are many people who from various causes never take any exercise, seldom walking even, when it is possible to avoid it. What is the result? The various disorders, generally known under the name of indigestion, which arise from a want of circulation of blood through the bowels. Constipation and headache are well known to be the general companions of those who lead a very sedentary life. More marked is the effect when worry and anxiety is added, for it greatly reduces the functions of the stomach, and in some cases causes diarrhoea, in others flatulency and other evils. I would point out that bodily exercise which is to benefit the system must be regular, and, if possible, it should be taken in the open air, and combined with amusement. The fast-growing fashion of each lady in the household undertaking some light household duty is very good, but it should never take the place of outdoor exercise.

**CHEESE RICE.**—Boil a quarter of a pound of rice slowly in a pint and a half of water till tender. Drain away any water that is not absorbed. Shred two ounces of cheese. Put it in half a pint of hot milk, and with it an ounce of butter. When dissolved, add the rice, and season highly with cayenne and salt. Butter a pie-dish, fill with the mixture, scatter grated cheese over, and bake for half an hour.

**CELERY SAUCE** is very good for serving with boiled fowl instead of white sauce. Make it after my recipe and it will be much appreciated. Boil two large heads of celery in salt and water till tender. Cut it in small pieces and put it in a saucepan with three-quarters of a pint of milk. Blend together two ounces of butter and a tablespoonful of flour, add it to the sauce. Simmer all together and then pass through a wire sieve. Heat the sauce again, season to taste, and pour over the fowl.

**LEMON ROLLY-POLY** is a dish which one does not often meet with, but is one that will be popular now that fruit will be getting scarce. Make a nice light suet crust, roll out thin, spread with lemon-curd—the same as would be used for lemon cheesecakes. Roll up, wet the edges, tie in a cloth, and boil for three hours.

**FOR Coughs and Colds** Bronchonia can be relied upon to give immediate relief. For many years this preparation has been recommended by a physician of large practice with the greatest success, and it behoves those of my readers who would otherwise treat such an ailment as a cold lightly, to ignore palliatives such as lozenges and sweetstuffs, and to obtain a remedy which is a certain cure.

**TO ELLA.**—I will gladly give you my advice as to furnishing your bedroom in a hygienic way. I would either stain and polish the floor, or else cover it with a plain brown linoleum. Either way the floor can be kept clean by polishing constantly with beeswax, and on the other days by rubbing with a duster. Have mats laid down which can be easily taken up and shaken. Have an iron bedstead, for in case of illness it does not retain infection. If you wish your room to be healthy do not have too much drapery, as it only harbours dirt and dust. I would advise washing cretonne for curtains, the designs and colouring in this are delightful. Capital camp washing-stands are to be had. This and your dressing-table should be hidden by a screen, as you wish to combine bed and sitting-room. Throw a rug over your bed, and with the addition of a few cushions you have a most comfortable sofa.

**BAKED HADDOCK.**—This recipe is sent me by a lady who says she constantly uses it, the fish, cooked in this way, being excellent. Make a nice stuffing of bread-crumbs, chopped thyme, parsley, and lemon peel. Season with pepper and salt. Press all these ingredients together, using a little butter to bind. Fill the haddock where it has been cleaned, and fasten it together with a small skewer. Then put it in a baking tin, with a very small quantity of water, and a few pieces of butter on each fish. Bake in a moderate oven from twenty-five to thirty-five minutes, according to the size of fish. Just before serving sprinkle a few bread-crumbs over, and what liquor is in the tin serve with the fish.

**W. W. (Walton-on-Thames)** asks for a recipe for salting beef, so that when boiled it may present a bright red colour. Put two gallons of spring water in a large pan, five pounds of common salt, two pounds of moist sugar, and two ounces of saltpetre. Boil for half an hour, and skim carefully. A large round of beef would require to lie in this pickle for ten days before it is dressed. If bay salt is used, the beef will not be so mellow in colour.

"FASHION AND STOUT LADIES.—What strange things Taste and Fashion are, to be sure! Here in England, and Europe generally, are our ladies sighing to be slim, whilst from over the ocean come the moans of black and copper-coloured sisters who long to be fat. Corpulency is with them a beauty, and the fat woman is the Belle of the Ball! But these opposite degrees of taste have, in our case, more than the caprice of fashion to back them, for every one knows that obesity is a disease by which the person afflicted suffers most acutely, not only physically, but mentally. People have rather an erroneous idea, probably gathered from Dickens's Fat Boy in 'Pickwick,' that corpulent people have none of the finer feelings, and are of a lethargic and dull comprehension. This is altogether a mistake, as many a poor corpulent lady can tell you. When she ascends a crowded omnibus on a hot summer's day, every one of the indignant glances levelled at her by her more fortunate sisters are as so many little dagger thrusts of mortification, though her ruddy complexion and defiant stentorian breathing may seem to belie the truth of these words. In fact, the life of a very fat woman or man is one of most comic tragedy, with which few sympathise. Every one has heard of the poor little stout man in the 'Bab Ballads,' to whom even the privilege of suicide was denied, for, when he threw himself into the water, he found himself too fat to sink, and floated about like an inflated air-balloon, and unless somebody fished him out, is most likely floating still. But now that Mr. Russell's cure for obesity has become so deservedly well known and appreciated by many grateful thousands, there is no reason why stout people should linger in so deplorable a condition. Does it not seem ridiculous to live in such an uncomfortable state of corpulency when so sure a remedy as his is to be easily obtained? Many people have a horror of trying any cure for fear it should be harmful to their general health, and resort in preference to such stratagems as tight lacing, which is, indeed, very injurious, and should never be attempted. Mr. Russell's cure is as simple as it is efficacious and harmless, being purely vegetable, and containing nothing that can be in the least injurious to the most delicate stomach. It can hardly be given the obnoxious name of medicine, as it is a most refreshing and pleasant drink, and can be taken with the food in the same manner as wine, beer, or any other beverage.

It is very speedy in operation, for twenty-four hours after it has been swallowed a reduction of weight will be noticeable, and, if persevered with, the superfluous flesh will disappear gradually, never to return. A proof of its beneficial influence is to be seen in the fact that with the reduction of the weight comes a corresponding improvement in health and strength, and with these, bright eyes and a healthy complexion. No more painful shortness of breath, no more contemptuous glances from the slim sisters, and if your age be forty, you can still be fair without the other 'F,' and correspondingly happy and healthful. Mr. F. C. Russell's address is Woburn House, 27, Store Street, London, W.C., and on sending 6d. stamps, a reprint of the Press notices from hundreds of medical and other journals, both British and foreign, with other interesting particulars, including 'the' recipe, will be forwarded to all applicants."—The above is taken from last month's "Weldon's Illustrated Dressmaker."

"CURIOUS EFFECTS IN THE TREATMENT OF CORPULENCY.—The old-fashioned methods of curing obesity were based upon the adoption of a sort of starvation dietary. Would any reader now believe that by the new and orthodox treatment a stout patient can take almost double his usual quantity of food, and yet decrease one or two pounds of fat daily for a time? This is very singular, and directly hostile to previous opinions held by medical authorities, yet it is a fact. The author of the comparatively new system in question explains that the person under treatment is restored to a healthier state in the small space of twenty-four hours, having lost probably two pounds of superfluous deposit, the organs display great activity, and more food is required. By standing on a weighing machine the proof of reduction is incontrovertibly shown daily. In serious cases a five to ten pounds weekly loss is registered until the person approaches his or her normal weight; then the diminution becomes less pronounced, the muscles firmer, the brain more active, less sleep is desired, and finally a cure effected. Compiled reprints of medical and other journals and interesting particulars, including the "recipe," which is quite harmless, can be obtained from a Mr. Russell, of 27, Store Street, London, W.C., by enclosing 6d. stamps. We think our readers would do well to call their corpulent friends' attention to this."—"Staffordshire Sentinel."

## ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

Now that Christmas is so near, I think I cannot do better than give a very good recipe for a plum pudding. Take three-quarters of a pound of flour, two ounces of Borwick's baking powder, two ounces of bread-crumbs, one and a half pounds of suet, two pounds of raisins, one pound of currants, ten ounces of sugar, two ounces of almonds, one pound of mixed candied peel, salt and spice to taste. Mix the ingredients well together, and add six eggs, well beaten, and three-quarters of a pint of milk; divide in two, and boil eight hours.

I HAVE always looked askance at the craftily-worded advertisements of hire system traders, and I must confess it was a pleasant eye-opener when I had my attention called to the undertaking known as the Civil Service Musical Instrument Association, and discovered it to be, on investigation, a most admirable institution. The great advantage it possesses over other systems of the kind is that, in the event of misfortune overtaking the hirer, the instrument he is buying may be stored until the payments can be resumed, or it may be transferred to any approved person introduced by the hirer. The secretary tells me he will be pleased to send along a prospectus to any one who cares to address a post-card to 292, High Holborn, London, W.C.

THE RISING SUN STOVE POLISH is an excellent quality of blacklead, it cleans and brightens quickly, and with a small expenditure of labour. The Rising Sun metal polish cleans all bright metal articles and glass, effectually and speedily. Mack's double starch not only stiffens, but puts a bright gloss upon linen, as it contains borax, wax, gum, and starch gloss; all these being properly proportioned, prevent uncertainty and save trouble. Articles stiffened with Mack's double starch are always satisfactory. Chancellor's plate powder is very good. Samples of all these articles are sent by post for eight stamps, or each one separately for two stamps, from Chancellor and Co., 3, Charterhouse Buildings, London, E.C.

A LONG- FELT want in an important adjunct to a well-fitting dress is supplied by the Duplex Spring Hook and Eye. Hooks and eyes on the old-fashioned models frequently come undone of their own accord, but the Duplex has two springs, one at the top and the other at the bottom of the hook, which although quite easy to hook it is quite impossible for the hook to come undone of itself.

A NEAT substitute for braid at the foot of dresses is provided in the Amazon Skirt Facing, which makes a much neater and nicer finish than the old-fashioned braid, and the material being much superior it does not by its friction wear the boot. Another advantage this Skirt Facing has over braid is that being out on the bias it does not fray out and present the ragged appearance after long wear as is the case with braid.

THOSE who are partial to that most exquisite and costly of all scents, Otto of Rose, will be interested to learn that the peasants who produce it in Bulgaria have largely given up raising grain in order to raise roses. Whereas the price of Otto in large quantities three years ago came out at a ha'penny a drop, it now reaches from a penny to twopence a drop. Eight teaspoonfuls (an ounce) of Otto would now cost from two to three pounds, and a small canister not as large round as a dinner plate and about three inches thick would cost from two to three hundred pounds. The unprecedented demand appears to have been created by the "Vinolia" Soap Co., which consumes annually thousands of pounds' worth of Otto in Toilet "Vinolia" Soap and which has advertised an Otto Toilet Soap everywhere and so popularised this scent to an unprecedented extent. There has been quite a storm among the manufacturers of Toilet scents in France and elsewhere in consequence of the present high price, due to a certain firm of agents in Turkey buying up the bulk of Otto and so running up the price. Many manufacturers will now have to raise the prices of their products or else reduce the quantity they use of the expensive Otto. The manufacturers of "Vinolia" Soap are advertising that the price and quality of "Vinolia" Soap shall not be altered, but it is currently reported that they are not making any profit this year on their Otto Toilet Soap, though they held a very large quantity of the scent before the present extraordinary prices were reached.

To sufferers from Rheumatism, Gout, etc., Smedley's Chillie Paste can be confidently recommended. This specific is prepared by Messrs. Hirst, Brooke, and Hirst, Limited, Leeds, on the formula of Mr. Smedley, of Hydropathic fame. It is useful for such complaints as neuralgia, lumbago, sciatica, etc., and in the early stages of such complaints will effect a cure. It may be purchased of all chemists at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. per jar.

taken to or from the hospital; but the news very quickly got about. Very few particulars were known, for the two or three present on the occasion were dumb; but it was said that the Hospital Sergeant looked subsequently upset, and this small detail in itself spoke volumes as to the agitating nature of the occasion. It was as if one had spoken of a granite boulder being disturbed in its mountain fastnesses.

Another particular that leaked out was the fact that Harry Deacon had been led out from the presence of the man whose life he had striven to take, blinded by tears, and shaking with sobs like a woman. Those who saw this sight said they wished they might never see such another. At that time the balance hung perilously between life and death for the Colour-Sergeant. The sword still stabbed his labouring breast with every breath he drew, and sometimes he seemed to pass into that borderland that lies between time and eternity, where dreams and realities get mingled together in inextricable confusion. Yet even through the mists, as a lark's song pierces the grey on a cloudy day, came the echo of Alison's song:

The King of Love my Shepherd is.

The King of Love—of mercy—of reconciliation. The thought beat its high and holy lesson into the man's dazed brain. Forgive—forgive—forgive! even as you hope to be forgiven.

Hubert Claverdon—it is well to give him his right name now—had a wild and stormy past to look back upon. Not, perhaps, a very black one, as the world counts blackness, but dark enough to have caused the mother who idolised him to weep her eyes dim, and his father to turn from him as from some stranger.

He had burnt his boats, cut himself free from the old life and all its ties. If he came to be wept over as dead, better that than wept over as worthless. His sins would be forgotten and forgiven; the heart of the mother would cherish only the sweet and tender memories of his boyhood—the loving clasp of little arms about her neck; the fond, if noisy, greeting of the school-boy home for the holidays; the little birthday gift he bought for her with pardonable pride, its truest value the love that dictated it. She would forget the darker shadows of his young manhood; she would blot out even their traces with her gentle tears. And so, as many a world-stained man has done before

him, he sought salvation through the ranks, and he had found it, not only in the life of discipline, but still more fully in an absorbing and apparently perfectly hopeless love. Love that has for its object a noble woman, and is without hope, is tried as by a refiner's fire, and is more spiritual than of the earth. Love had taught Hubert Claverdon some of the highest and purest lessons of life; it was teaching him the highest of all now—that of the duty of full and free forgiveness of wrong.

"As God is my witness I had no grudge against you," said Deacon, cowering away from the sight of the changed face, the labouring breast of his victim. "I did the deed in a moment of madness. I would have given my own life to undo it, as I dropped my rifle on the stones and saw you lying there on your face. I had done it a hundred times in my dreams—a hundred, hundred times."

"What harm had I done you?" asked the Sergeant, wonder growing in his sunken eyes; then, even this plaint seemed to take the form of a flaw in the fulness and freeness of pardon, and he sighed as he said, wearily turning his head: "Never mind, it is all over now, and whatever comes—you and I part—friends."

The manacled hands could not touch that feeble one upon the coverlet, but the impulse to do so was betrayed by the faint clink of the chain between Deacon's wrists.

We who know the ins and outs of this story are well aware that the likeness in figure and gait between Colour-Sergeant and Adjutant was the secret of this tragedy; and it so chanced that on the fatal day Ellerton had been detained on duty rather late, and seen going about in uniform and not muffled.

The brain of the would-be murderer was dazed with drink, his heart inflamed with the raging fires of jealousy and hatred, a flame roused to madness by the chance sneer of an acquaintance. Before his eyes was a blood-red mist, and the rifle trembled in his grasp, as from the sheltering shadow of a doorway he took aim at the passing figure, which, leaping high, and flinging up wild arms to the bright sky as if in piteous appeal to Heaven, fell with a sickening thud, face downward on the stones.

It was all the work of a moment—all done in the warmth and glow of the quiet autumn sunshine.

A woman in the married quarters singing her child to sleep, stopped short in her song, crying out to her husband that some one was shot; and in an instant, capless, scarlet-coated figures leapt and ran, and strong hands tearing the still smoking rifle from the murderer's hand, held him in fierce grip, with hoarse and smothered execrations in their throats.

It was such a little time ago, and yet, how long ago it seemed now, to those most nearly connected with it!

Surely for a lifetime had Norah taken her daily way to the little chapel where the red light burned so steadily—pitilessly it seemed to her—and there besought dear Heaven for the life of the sin-stained man she loved!

Father John watched her with a tender, yearning pity that was still helpless to comfort. As he said his early mass, he prayed that the great Comforter who can comfort so much better and more surely than man, might at length—however far off in the future—console the sorrow that was too deep for human hand to touch or heal. In all his holy, simple life, he had never known such a grief. Terrible knowledge, too, was locked within his troubled breast. To him the identity of the man Private Deacon of the Hundred and Ninety-Third Regiment intended to kill was no mystery. Thankful indeed was the good old priest that he did not know the name and status of that man. Enough, and more than enough, he knew to account for the black sin of murder attempted on that sunny day, whose brightness and beauty was marred by a terrible tragedy. Silence was now his duty to the girl whose name would be bandied about as that of some wanton, were the truth known—nay, not the truth in very truth, but that garbled version of it which would soon be set going like some slimy reptile creeping in and out among the throngs of men. For who would believe the pure and perfect innocence of the lowly-born and simple maid? What he could say—the good father who knew every secret of her heart—would go for naught. The child of his tenderness and his prayers would be flouted by the world that is ever so ready to be cruel to a woman; her name would be made a jest and by-word of among those who were not worthy to tie the little ribbon of her pretty shoe.

Norah's good name must be protected and held sacred; but the good old man

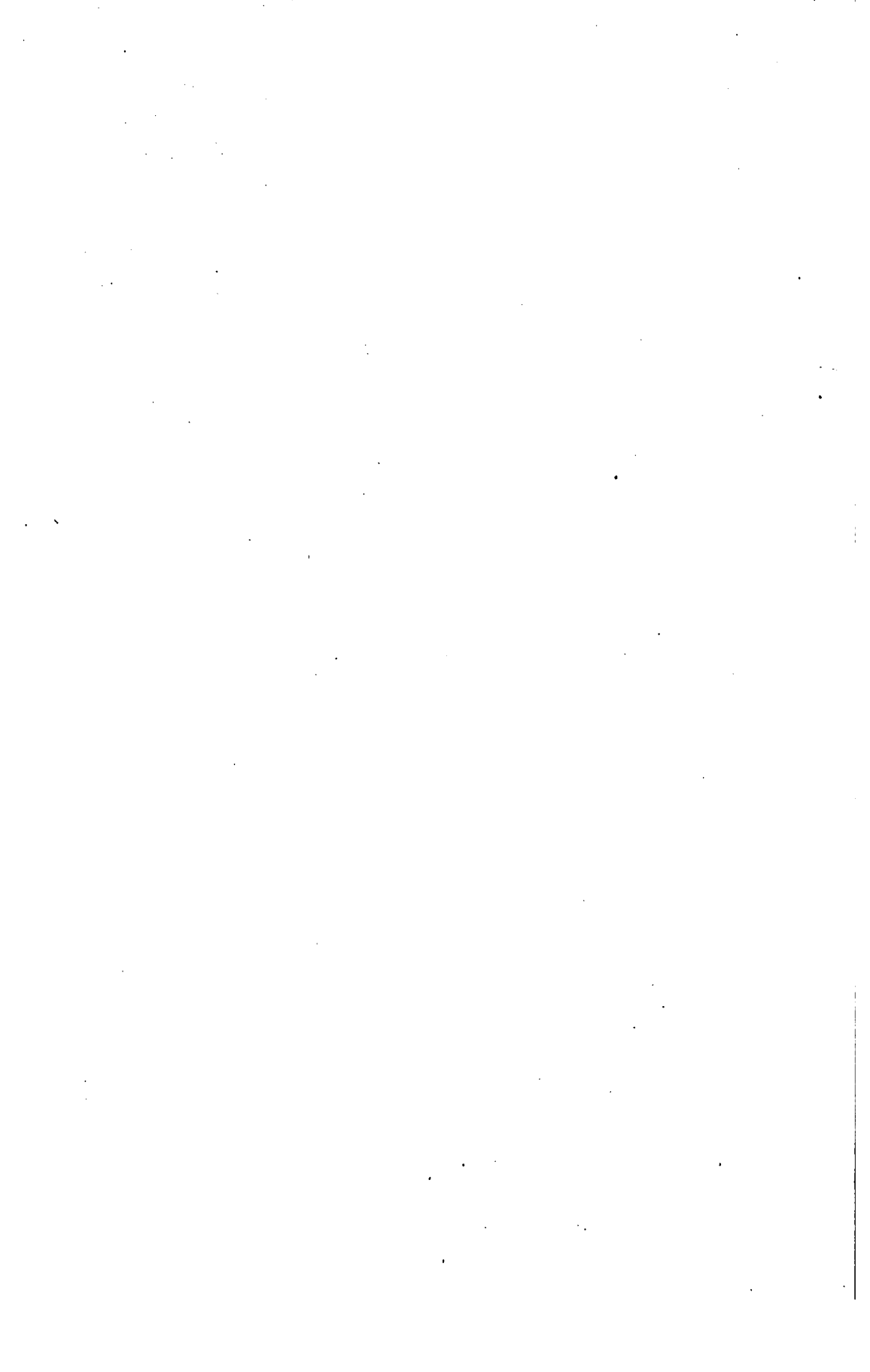
set his sparse teeth—and, maybe, wished the power were his to utter a strong, expressive word or two—when he thought of the man who had escaped scot-free, and of the man, innocent of all wrong, who now lay doing grievous battle with death. It will be seen that Captain Ellerton's sins and shortcomings took a deeper hue in the eyes of Father John than they would have taken in those of the average man of the world. Still, even the priest fully recognised the entire absence of any justification of Deacon's crime, and the reasonableness of the old decree, a life for a life.

There is, we know, a very narrow line between the vehemence of the passions of hatred and revenge, and the exaltation of madness. The brain of a man excited alike by strong drink, and the whirl of a raging anger, is like a horse that the rider's hand cannot guide or control. The lust to kill—terrible child of unrestrained passion—was the demon that had wrought such ill, blighting poor Norah's life and love for ever. Hardly less eagerly than those about the injured man's bed, did Father John hunger for news of his state, long and pray that life might win, and cruel death might lose. Day in and day out his venerable figure made its appearance at the big gates leading into the square, as with gentle persistency he asked for news from the hospital. Once when the doctor's verdict was a little more hopeful, the old man bared his grey head as he listened, the soldiers about the gate wondering all the while, and smiling one to the other.

But of all this Father John saw nothing. Was not Norah waiting at the turn of the road—the little shawl upon her head pulled low about her face, and from the shadow her great eyes, larger now from the hollows that tears had worn about them, gazing, weary, sad, eager, haggard in their misery, for the coming of the dark figure, the bearer of news, which in her simple heart she took to mean her Harry's life or death?

The first time that the news was that of a shadow of hope, the old man almost trotted in his eagerness to carry it quickly, and the people, hurriedly getting out of his way, crossed themselves, as a sort of set-off against having very nearly run up against the "holy prate."

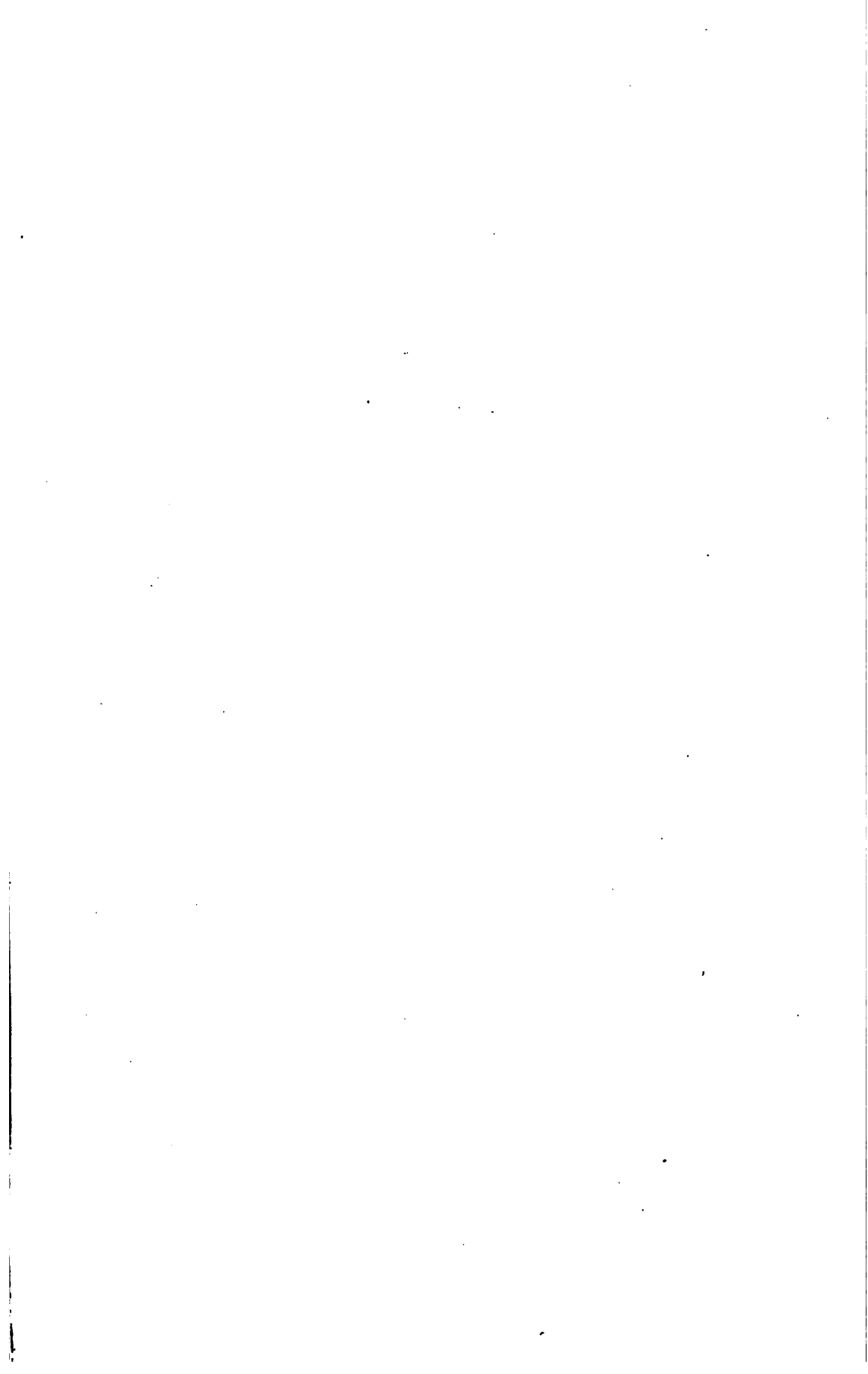
How great was the joy of two hearts as he and Norah met that day! How she cried out in her gladness as she had never











NOV 23 1894

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Empire. It is hoped, also, that in course of time local Registries may be associated with eleemosynary and Benefit Societies, at least as far as regards able-bodied men and lads who are receiving the assistance of such societies, and who are eligible for entry on the registrar's list."

That is the point: a large system of associated Bureaux working in communication with each other throughout the country and the Colonies, not small local bodies standing alone and being able to do good only in their own district. And who should work such a system? Is it right and fair for the work to be left in many instances entirely to private enterprise, with no help and little encouragement from any public bodies? The manager of the Ipswich Bureau is hopeful that the work may be taken over by the Corporation. So might it be for each local branch, but if ever the dream of an "affiliated system of Labour Bureaux at home and in the Colonies" comes to pass, surely it will have to be, not under private enterprise or municipal protection, but a great national movement worked by the Government.

One little point suggests itself in conclusion. Surely there must be some English word which would express the idea quite as well as the foreign "Bureau."

### A SKETCH IN MINNESOTA.

THE beautiful State of Minnesota is the special harvest-land of the Western world, and the lavish wealth of waving corn which glorifies the brilliant landscape resembles a sunset sea, rolling in shining billows to the blue rim of the distant horizon. As the ripened ears sway in the summer breeze, the amber waves deepen into orange, and brighten into red where buck-wheat glows in the sun, or maize swings ruddy tassels amid feathery leaves. Tawny wheat pales into the gold of drooping oats, and the creamy tints of barley or rye on upland slopes, "white unto harvest," complete the scale of colour. Leagues of golden light and glancing shadow reveal the riches of the virgin soil whereon Nature pours her precious gifts in bounteous profusion, treasures old as the human race, and unchanged even in this Western clime. The harvests of the earth have been called "the golden links which unite the ages and the zones, making of the earth one great home, and of the human race one

great family." It is a curious fact that corn has never been known as anything but a cultivated plant; it cannot grow spontaneously, and is never self-sown, or self-diffused. A supernatural origin is ascribed to it in the mythologies of all ancient nations, and even the roving Indian of the American prairies speaks of the stately maize as "Mondamin," "the Spirit's Grain." Primitive types of all other esculent plants are scattered through the various quarters of the globe, but original types of the corn-plants are not to be found, and the grains of wheat taken from Egyptian tombs erected before the birth of history, are identical with the seed sown to-day. As we look upon the fair North-Western landscape teeming with the harvest gold which forms the truest wealth of earth, the beautiful idea of a famous German botanist seems especially applicable to the scene before us: "With corn is connected rest, peace, and domestic happiness of which the wandering savage knows nothing; harvest implies possession, imposes labour and restraint, and rivets the links of social life."

The great cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, once ten miles apart, but now virtually united, have attained their present status through the cereal wealth of these prairie lands; the machine factories of St. Paul, and the flour-mills of Minneapolis, though the largest in the United States, scarcely meeting the requirements of the ever-increasing tract of country cleared and cultivated in the great North-West. Even the picturesque Falls of St. Anthony, at the head of the Mississippi, have been sacrificed to the prosaic task of turning gigantic mills, and the fettered torrent, imprisoned within a network of wheels, dams, and sluices, has been changed from a romantic cascade to a manufacturing "water-power." The twin cities, busy, populous, and thriving, but destitute of all interest save that produced by the almighty dollar, suggest only the inevitable prose of life, which predominates until the social chaos rounds into form, and the comparative leisure of a settled condition permits the graces of existence to take root in congenial soil.

We soon exchange the busy hives of commerce for the sunny shores of Lake Minnetonka, encircled by a shining girdle of corn, wherein three miniature lakes are set like emeralds in a golden frame. The white tents of summer camping parties border these placid pools; fairy canoes